Transgressions

A Journal of Urban Exploration

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Transgressions
A Journal of Urban Exploration

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ABSTRACTS

The articles abstracted below have been refereed. This means that the editor has sent out each article to two or three people prepared to comment on its contents. These comments are sent back to the author who then makes amendments to her or his paper.

SITUATIONIST POISE, SPACE AND ARCHITECTURE

by James Burch

This essay explores the links between avant-garde architectural practice and the theories of the Situationist International. It questions how the situationists playful resistances to commodity reification might be used to attack the discipline of architecture. Asger Jorn's 'Modifications' are used to illustrate the critical poise situationist theory promoted and to provide an example of the urban space the situationists wished to construct. These ideas are further elaborated by reference to the Paris Commune, a social space favoured by the situationists. The paper concludes with a comparison of situationist related architectures and British 'traveller' communities, demonstrating the limits of architecture as social critique or vehicle for revolutionary action.

MANCHESTER'S 'VILLAGE IN THE CITY':THE GAY VERNACULAR IN A POST-INDUSTRIAL LANDSCAPE OF POWER

by Steve Quilley

Recent commentaries on the relationship between gay culture and the (re)construction of urban space have tended to emphasise the agency of gay men. In this account of the emergence of Manchester's Gay Village, shifts in local politics and transitions in the political economy of the city have been foregrounded. It is suggested that, from playing a role in a wider discourse of resistance to Thatcherism, the gay presence in the city has, since 1987, been increasingly incorporated into a post-modern narrative of cosmopolitan diversity. The limited gay presence in Manchester has become intimately entwined with a much broader political and economic project. As this implies, the expansion and consolidation of the Village may depend, at least to some extent, on how sustainable that project turns out to be.

THE TROUBLE WITH CAMP

by Jon Binnie

Against the background of the post-modern emphasis on difference, this paper argues that Camp represents a key discourse for sexual dissidents. The author argues that the sophistication of cultural studies and cultural geography masks an inability to engage with the lived experiences of sexual dissidents. Camp has been de-homosexualised and assimilated into discussions of post-modern culture. This leads into a discussion of academic practices which discipline the study of sexuality. While Camp may have a subversive potential both inside and outside the academy, I argue that abstract theoretical debate about 'queer performativity' is itself largely disembodied and decidedly straight.

Notes for Contributors to **Transgressions**

1. **Transgressions** is a radical forum for the discussion of the subversion and libertarian renewal of urban society and space. Contributors should note that **Transgressions** seeks to publish work that is well written, intelligently provocative and previously unpublished.
2. Contributions can be of any length. Longer submissions will be refereed. Submissions may take the form of articles, debate pieces, reviews (of anything) or reportage and news pieces.
3. Submissions (three copies) should be sent to the editor:

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4. For articles an abstract (three copies) of 100-200 words should also be supplied.
5. Submissions need to follow our house style in order to be considered for publication (exceptions to this policy can be made, but please contact the editor):

   5i. References in the text should take the following form: (Apple, 1976, p.4)

   5ii. Direct quotations should put in double quotation marks. Quotations within quotations should be put in single quotation marks. Long quotations should be indented.

   5iii. Footnotes should be placed at the end of the article and before the bibliography.

   5iv. The style for the bibliography is as follows:

FUSS, D. (1989) *Essentially Speaking: Feminism, Nature and Difference* New York, Routledge
MANUEL, F. (Ed.) (1973) *Utopias and Utopian Thought* London, Souvenir Press
ROBERTS, M. (1991) 'Mutations of the spectacle: *vitrines*, arcades, mannequins' *French Cultural Studies* 2(3) pp.211-249
SMITH, N. and KATZ, C. (1993) 'Grounding metaphor: towards a spatialized politics; in M. KEITH and S. PILE (Eds) *Place and the Politics of Identity* London, Routledge

   5v. Subtitles should be in lower case

6. All submitted material should be double spaced and typed on one side of the sheet. If a piece is accepted the authors will be requested to send a copy of their work on 3.5" disk.

EDITORIAL

Alastair Bonnett

Transgressions is a new forum for the discussion of urban resistance and transformation. It aims to bring together activists, artists, writers and academics who have something to say about the way cities and towns in which we live have been constructed within the field of power and about how this process can be challenged and changed. You will find here scholarly texts nuzzled up against pithy reportage pieces, weighty expositions with pendulous bibliographies shyly touching fingers with heroic rants and startling explorations.

Transgressions aims to exhibit a mass of stimulating tensions: a refereed journal with little respect for academia, a place for 'critique' with a penchant for 'action', a magazine that both embraces and deconstructs radical commitment. This is no pure space, handing down scholarship from the safe, clean clouds of academia or utopian indignation from the equally cloistered perspective of the avant-garde.

Transgressions aims to be a site of engagement, of contestation, creatively colliding and bringing into question the institutions of radical knowledge creation. All this, and more, for the price of an incredibly expensive sandwich!

In this editorial I want to do two things. Firstly I'm going to set out the background to the journal, where it has come from and where, I hope, it will be going. Secondly, I shall address the thorny concept that we have placed at the heart of this enterprise, the politics of transgression.

The Transgressions Project

The background of those involved in the founding of Transgressions (Fabian Tompsett, David Pinder and myself) finds its common root in a shared interest in situationist, anarchist and communist theories of urban challenge and renewal.

Through different, if at times interconnecting, paths, both activist and academic, we have each been concerned with the critical re-evaluation of the politics and potentialities of urban space. This interest draws from the anarchist and communist

hostility to the oppressive edifices of Power and Authority and, somewhat more directly, from the situationists' playful experiments with mapping and reshaping peoples' everyday experiences of socio-spatial control and conformity.

And it is the ludic qualities of the situationists vision, their affirmation of, and fascination with, the *pleasures* and *adventures* of urban life, that have, more than anything else, inspired the inclusion of the term 'exploration' in our title.

As the accounts of urban drifts and actions we publish in this edition indicate, urban exploration is an activity designed to disorientate and defamiliarize everyday geography. Through such acts of creative engagement the potential for change within the 'mundane', 'ordinary', 'unchangeable' realities of urban living can come to be realised. The best metropolitan adventures (from solitary trespasses to large-scale events, such as the London Poll Tax riot of 1991) can make both the boundaries and the fragility of existing power relations starkly visible. They can also make the city seem a place where libertarian change is not merely possible but already embryonic, hidden but perceptibly, sometimes painfully, kicking within a myriad of sites of resistance and desire.

Our political influences have combined, then, to produce a subversive view of both the way the common sense 'reality' of metropolitan life is constructed and the way it may be challenged. The situationist and anarchist/communist projects are, of course, not above criticism. Their often unreflexive, arrogant and intellectually lazy utopianism necessitate that they be sites of engagement rather than reverence. Such a critical optic can, I believe, be sharpened considerably by **Transgressions**'s ability to draw from academic as well as activist sources. The growth of interest in issues of social control and subversion amongst sociologists, human geographers and others, is generating a wealth of important and useful material. Mike Davis's (1990) accounts of the development of social surveillance and exclusion techniques in Los Angeles and Elizabeth Wilson's (1991) histories of women's changing relationship to the city, are just two, albeit influential, examples of a much wider trend.

It is, however, becoming evident that much of the most interesting work done on the subject of urban transgression is neither purely activist nor purely scholarly but equivocally placed between, and questioning of, these two roles. In particular the growing literature on the sexualized, racialized and gendered nature of urban space, often combines political commitment with academic exposition. **Transgressions** will be providing a space for such ambiguously positioned work.

A journal like this one must also be prepared to be constantly brought into collision with forces that can reinvigorate its founding ambitions. To this end we hope to make editorial and practical, mutually supporting, links with a variety of (sub)cultural adventurers, links that will help our project remain engaged and self-critical.

In summary, our ambition is not to establish yet another 'alternative' institution that channels intellectual energies into self-perpetuating and endless loops of either politically aloof deconstruction or uncritical propaganda, but to assist in the renewal of creative, reflexive and anti-authoritarian radicalism.

Explorations in Conformity and Subversion

Two more points about **Transgressions** need to be made, and made clearly:

- This isn't a journal dedicated to the celebration of transgression,
- We are as interested in acts of conformism as we are in acts of transgression (and we'd like more submitted material on the former please!).

I want to expand on each of these two themes, beginning with the first.

It is, perhaps, unsurprising that in an age of conservative ascendency, an era in which traditional leftist institutions have become increasingly marginal, even redundant, that radical intellectuals have become mesmerized by the mere possibility of subversive behaviour. From the early-1980s onwards this phenomenon has been most clearly reflected in self-consciously post-modernist writings. Indeed post-modern gurus, such as the editors of Semiotext(e) and Kroker, Kroker and Cook (1989), have often appeared to glorify transgression as, somehow, an end in itself.

Speaking personally, the nadir of this enterprise was Flemming and Wilson's (1987) truly depressing *Semiotext(e) USA* book. In typical radical post-modernist style this compilation's ostensible pretension was to bombard its audience with a multitude of divergent extremisms: advocates of Albanian communism next to champions of paedophilia, syndicalists next to spiritualists. The net effect was to make any one of these enterprise's moral and social ambitions meaningless whilst uncritically and unreflexively instating transgression as, to use po-mo speak, an unassailable meta-narrative.

Thankfully post-modernist endeavours of this sort have had a rather short shelf-life. The 1990s has witnessed the development of a more worldly set of agendas. Influenced by the work of non-western writers within academia, and a variety of social resistance movements outside, a new self-questioning yet consciously politically committed perspective is beginning to assert itself (for a lot of people round the world, of course, it never went away!). The idea of transgression is increasingly being viewed not as an object of pseudo-libertarian tantalisation but as a vital analytic tool, a way of understanding how contemporary relations of power and privilege are maintained and disrupted.

This brings me neatly to the second of the two points I want to discuss, the need to look at transgression in the context of conformity, and *visa versa*. Obviously the boundaries of the one define those of the other. As this implies, when exploring the limits and possibilities of urban transformation, we need to be aware of how places and movements are constructed as 'normal', as 'ordinary', as 'conventional' and so on. The production of, for example, heterosexual space as the norm and of White locations as 'familiar' need to be looked at as political projects; projects that draw on ideas of what is proper and what is improper, what is central and what is marginal, what is conformist and what is transgressive.

Transgression and conformity also need to be seen, not merely to mutually defining, but as impure, contradictory undertakings. Thus, for example, heterosexual

space, obsessively defining itself against a deviant Other, can also be seen as laced with traces of homoerotic denial and disclosure, of a dual attraction/revulsion to sexual orthodoxy and subversion. Such 'secret histories' of impurity overlap with moments and places that seem beyond classification, that appear to be 'neither one thing nor the other'; sites of creative collision and hybridity. It is within such mutant geographies that we may find the most exciting arena for social transformation.

Such are the complexities that need to be addressed by those seeking to unpack the workings of power and authority in 'our' cities. It is a huge task. A task that **Transgressions** seeks to enable, to encourage, rather than fulfil with each and every article.

What we will be publishing are texts that accord with the general direction, and intellectual spirit, mapped out above. We are looking for items that seek to expose the boundaries of power and resistance within the contemporary city and/or can share some sense of adventure and delight at the possibilities of urban exploration.

It's coming round to 11pm. A fire alarm is clanging away from a distant corridor. It's a hot night. My window is jammed right open. From outside this tiny room I can hear the sound of a truck starting up and moving off down St. George Street.

Somewhere, out there, or so I have been told, a million moments of revolution are waiting to be named.

Alastair Bonnett
Toronto

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Situationist Poise, Space and Architecture

by James Burch

"Alas", said the mouse, "the world is growing smaller every day. At the beginning it was so big that I was so afraid, I kept running and running, and I was glad when at last I saw walls far away to the right and left, but these long walls have narrowed so quickly that I am in the last chamber already, and there in the corner stands the trap I must run into."
"You only need to change your direction", said the cat, and ate it up.[1]

In Kafka's *Little Fable* the cornered mouse understands his own position in the world by defining himself with self-wished boundaries. These narrow, creating a single point perspective within which he may orientate himself. The mouse runs, following the direction he has set himself until he is trapped. He forgets that it is he himself who has formulated the boundaries that trap him.

The fable succinctly describes the concept of reification. Events created by human agency are misapprehended as an over-riding 'given' which goes on to define further human action. The situationists, the subjects of this article, understood society to be in a similar predicament to Kafka's mouse. They offered critiques of, and resistance to, the sense of entrapment society's restrictive socio-economic self-definitions have led to. They invited us to act on the cat's taunt: *You need only change your direction!* For a situationist, the cat's is a cruel irony, the self-formulated reifications of the mousetrap will fall away if the mouse world-view is disrupted, re-opened to fresh perspectives.

The situationists invent a new political position from which to launch their attacks on reified society and, with this cultural poise, they inform a new understanding of space. But theirs was always a shifting position - attempting to continually destabilise the behavioural procedures with which society restricts itself. 'Situationist space' was similarly transient - a contested social space continuously remaking itself to avoid the closure of perspective which Kafka's fable threatens. Yet the situationists did not simply define this new urban space in reaction to the city extant but proposed a new urbanism and new architecture. Here, we concentrate on that paradox. How the

situationists related their critical poise and revolutionary space to architecture - itself an art of reification, which objectifies ideas as artefacts and, in Michel Foucault's words, fixes the "spatialisation of knowledge".[2]

POISE

The situationists developed a rationally argued framework to describe the process of alienation they saw as inherent in capitalist society. This they theorised as the Society of the Spectacle. Despite the totalising logic of this framework, the situationists also insisted on the primacy of a 'natural' radicalised subjective will which, paradoxically, was supposed to usurp a system within which it was powerless to operate. For Alastair Bonnett, this inherent contradiction in situationist thought renders its political force impotent. He argues that: "Situationism is both too romantic and too rational a philosophy to be politically plausible".[3] The rational system of relations described by the concept of the Spectacle leads to the effacement of any natural romantic subject as a form of criticism.

Analysed within their separate frames of reference a revolution of radical subjectivity and the reified images of the Society of the Spectacle are antithetical propositions. However, if one understands the subjective and objective parts of situationist theory as operating together to change the world, this inherent contradiction becomes the point at which the theory provides most effective criticism. Situationist practice carries within it a libertarian urge to practically demonstrate the quality of un-reified lived experience. Situationist theory is simply an adjunct to this aim and should be understood as a tool, fashioned in order to manoeuvre oneself and create a position from which to act.

Georges Bataille's metaphor of the Pyramid and the Labyrinth may be used to illustrate the position from which the situationists did act. Denis Hollier, in his book on Bataille - *La Prise de la Concorde* (1974), uses these architectural metaphors to discuss Bataille's philosophical project. The labyrinth of experience encompasses all - including a being's comprehension of its relation to the labyrinth - in an unsurmountable ambiguity. A being cannot orientate itself inside the labyrinth because "one never is inside the labyrinth ... unable to leave it, unable to grasp it with a single glance, one never knows if one is inside".[4] As the labyrinth is "not a referent ... neither the category of subjectivity nor the category of objectivity can exist in this space", though the labyrinth "has no replacement to offer".[5]

For Bataille, "[a]ll of existence, as far as men are concerned, is specifically bound up with language whose terms decide each individual's vision of it".[6] Language stands within the labyrinth as the way being can substantiate its existence. But this substantiation of being always involves closure of possibilities as "a network of concentric sub-ordination's (grammatical, ontological, ideological, logical, social etc.)" are formulated to found the substantiation.[7] Thus we construct a pyramidal structure of language or thought within which meanings become fixed, determinate. Although the pyramid is "only a product of the labyrinth itself and thoroughly belong[ing] to it"[8], there is always a temptation to build it higher, to try and see beyond the confines of the labyrinth and guide us out of it. We forget that the pyramid

is only another route within (or without) the labyrinth.

For Hollier, both pyramid and labyrinth are necessary - being sits on the threshold between them nurtured by the creative force of the labyrinth, venturing into pyramidal structures in order to express itself:

> **the pyramid is, in effect, inevitable but impracticable (interminable), whereas the labyrinth is elusive (non-sizeable) but impossible to circumvent.**[9]

By using the metaphor of the Pyramid and Labyrinth one can see that spectacularised capitalism constructs a system of relations which must alienate subjectivity in order to establish an internally coherent discourse. Within the perspective view of the pyramidal Spectacle, the linear conception of accumulation of capital and its accompanying ideology of 'progress' make labyrinthine nature appear an imprisonment. One realises that one will never follow the Ariadne's thread of capital accumulation out of the labyrinth and from this pyramidal perspective one then views the labyrinth as a restriction on growth. But by viewing the totalising perspective of the Spectacle as a pyramidal construction *within* the labyrinth, the situationists see reification as a closure of existential possibilities and have no qualms over insisting on subjective un-alienated relations within the Spectacle. The situationists construct their pyramidal description of the Society of the Spectacle from an understanding of its position as part of the labyrinth - mindful of the inherent problems of closure and 'interminability' which a pyramidal construct carries. The Spectacle encloses the situationists, yet they continue to develop the theory of spectacular relations "nonetheless, to transgress the closure they build."[10] Thus, their critique involves the rationally constructed theory of the Spectacle and an insistence on the presence of some '*other*'. The boundaries of the Spectacle are subverted toward subjective ends.

As with their theoretical construct, the situationists key strategy of *détournement* carries the same play between pyramid and labyrinth. Found images, objects, text or sound are placed in a different context. The juxtaposition creates a new meaning - the full potential of which relies upon a play of meanings between the original texts and their new position. *Détournement* resulted in:

> The mutual interference of two worlds of feeling, or the bringing together of two independent expressions, supersed[ing] the original elements and produc[ing] a synthetic organisation of greater efficacy.[11]

What is salutary in the situationist practice of *détournement* is the attitude it brings to the construction of meaning. Theirs is the liberating assertion that one is most alive - that one **is** *being* - when one positions oneself on the threshold of meaning. As Denis Hollier notes, it is in relating different elements, and its ability to attribute meaning to a relation between elements, that humanity creates language. It is in the act of creating these relationships that humanity substantiates its existence. The situationists step back onto the threshold of meaning, and, in refusing the restrictions of a single discursive framework of understanding, obtain the poise with which to explore the boundless, *un*surmountable labyrinth of sensual experience. Within this labyrinth,

they rediscover the pyramidal structures that order our existential understanding (necessary to substantiate communication and therefore necessarily restrictive in interpretation). In acts of *détournement* these pyramids of meaning are explored, toyed with, disassembled, remade and broken. Through *détournement*, the juxtaposition of two discursive meaning-structures creates a new third meaning - a play between one's received understandings of the original terms. This practice readjusts and enlivens the frames of reference that substantiate our existence. The situationists enable us, through our creative re-readings of *détourned* objects, *to be* more fully alive.

Here then is the poise from which the situationists launch their subversions. They invite us to work at the threshold between Labyrinth and Pyramid.

How then does this relate to the fabrication of objects or architecture systems where ideas are necessarily objectified? The situationist Asger Jorn analysed the problem of art as an objectification of the communication between two subjects - the 'artist' and the 'observer'. He criticised the American Abstract Expressionists 'action painting' as a purely subjective expression - the canvas simply there to collect traces from the "pure creator who does nothing but fulfil *himself* through the materials for his own pleasure".[12] This he saw in opposition to the Classical conception of art which valorised the autonomy of the object as something to be appreciated free from reference. Jorn used *détournement* to "play between the dialectic of the[se] two opposites".[13] Buying anonymous kitsch artworks from markets (artefacts broken free from context - free from reference), Jorn painted over them in a *détournement* which he saw as a rejuvenation of the latent subjectivity in the object. These *Modifications* - as they were described for Jorn's exhibition in 1959 - shifted the role of the artefact away from being either autonomous object of commodification or an objectified expression of the unique talent of the artist. Instead détourned paintings revitalised banal images into: "simultaneously ... object and inter-subjective communication"[14].

Through *détournement* the autonomy of the artwork was subverted. New marks on a long-since finished canvas re-open the artwork towards the possibility of continuing modification - never to be an enclosed object again. Jorn's choice of kitsch figurative pictures as subjects for *détournement* made the 'artist-détourner' recognise the object's already extant language of figuration and forced him into dialogue with an already objectified world. Thus, un-alienated subjective will is forced to engage with the objective world through *détournement* - there is a play between a labyrinthine subjective expression and the pyramidal constructions of the Classical.

The détourned object must remain unstable, susceptible to recuperation, if it is to remain alive to subjective appropriation and inter-subjective communication. The détourned object must stand poised on the threshold between Pyramid and Labyrinth - liable to both recuperation as a newly fashioned reified image, and, to interiorised collapse into subjectivity.

The situationists aimed to throw public conception of the city into similar compromise. As Jorn had opened up the easel painting as a site of inter-subjective communication, the situationists wanted to undermine the reified spatio-temporal zone of the city. Through *détournement* - by intentional misreading of city space - the

city would "be experienced not as a thing at all, but as possibilities".[15] The situationists encourage people to *dérive*, practising "a technique of transient passage through varied ambiences".[16] The aim here is not simply to stroll purposeless through city-space, but to create spatial *détournements*, subverting the reified image of the city by the introduction of a subjective reading. Guy Debord's détourned map *Naked City* (1957) charts this new conception of urban space. Nineteen cut-out sections of a map of Paris are re-linked by directional arrows - "psychogeographical turntables" where the user is redirected towards the exploration of new ambiences. As with Jorn's *Modifications*, *Naked City* re-assembles the city as an open framework within which citizens can construct their own narrative readings, becoming a traveller in a labyrinth of their own making, revealed by their own wish to find it.[17]

SPACE

Returning again to Jorn's *Modifications*, whereas the 'artist's' *détournement* of kitsch figurative canvases suggests possibilities of transience, change and dialogue on the surface of the painting; it does not require such a depth of engagement from the 'observer'. The observer remains a passive onlooker - the painting, a commodified object.

The subversions of *détournement* and *dérive* had limited effect when the system of reified relations within which these détourned objects were framed was left un-criticised, allowed to decompress and recuperate their subversive interventions. Any attempts to break down the separation between subject and object had to change the whole framework of relations within which these categories were subscribed. Instead of a framework which related notions of object and subject through terms of mutual exclusion, a framework was required which operated to unite object and subject in open unstable relations sympathetic to détournement and the creation of a radicalised inter-subjectivity.

For the situationists space offered such a set of relations where the objective world of pyramidal constructs and the subjective labyrinth of sensual experience could be combined. The situationists therefore concentrated on the quality of experience of the objective world, that is, on the social construction of space - in Lefebvre's words - "*l'espace vécu*". Lived space, to be realised through the construction of situations:

> A moment of life concretely and deliberately constructed by the collective organisation of a unitary ambience and a game of events.[18]

Analysis of revolutionary space as it briefly existed in Paris in 1871 will help illustrate a referential frame which relates object and subject in inter-subjectivity. For the situationists:

> The Commune represents *the only realisation of a revolutionary urbanism to date* - attacking on the spot the petrified signs of the dominant organisation of life, understanding social space in political terms, refusing to accept the innocence of the monument.[19]

In the creation of the Commune and in its self defence its operation was fundamentally spatial. Changing the relations of production at a basic economic level was ignored, the Communards preferring to level monuments than seize the assets of the poorly defended French National Bank. Instead they developed a new conceptual attitude to space. In their construction of a freely organised city life, they resisted accepted patterns of movement and countered the separation of public and private realms. The construction of the barricades, quick, utilitarian, transient - a double *détournement* of everyday objects into obstacles, streets into dead-ends - was a rejection of the monumental city. Whereas isolate stable monuments gave a timeless structure to surrounding spatial uses, the barricades were tactical, disputative structures briefly contending the accepted function of the street as thoroughfare. Faced with barricades, troops were immobilised long enough for the Communards, concealed in surrounding houses, "to pelt them with ... anything that can be used as a projectile".[20] While the barricades jammed the public flow of space, the surrounding privatised space of housing was opened up in a practice of *lateral piercing*. As Communard's guarded the ground floor others pulled up the staircases and on the upper levels broke through adjoining houses as far as possible.

The stratification of space engendered by the system of capitalist relations was broken down, practices of spatial reification chased away. Anti-heirarchisation was also pursued at a symbolic level. The Communards toppled the Vendôme Column - a monument appropriated by Napoleon to celebrate his military achievements.

The Communards' resistance was not simply a negation of the reification of space. They did not simply react to, but positively created a new spatial character. Against *stratified space* where movement is confined to fixed paths and goals - where streets are conduits, fixing the pattern of movement, historically pre-set; the Communards posit a *smooth space* which is open-ended. The Vendôme Column's privileging of verticality, and the creation around it of vertical systems of congregation, was undone. Lateral piercing created a space where one could rise up and travel from a multiplicity of points. In the Commune:

> the mode of distribution is the *nomos*: arraying oneself in an open space (hold the street), as opposed to the *logos* of entrenching oneself in a closed space (hold the fort).[21]

Thus, Deleuze and Guattari's conceptions of *smooth* and *striated* space capture the qualities the situationists valued in the Paris Commune:

> Smooth space is a field without conduits or channels. A field, a heterogeneous smooth space, is wedded to a very particular type of multiplicity: nonmetric, acentred, rhizomatic multiplicities that occupy space without 'counting' it and can "be *explored only by legwork*".[22]

The smooth space of the Commune creates a space to be directly experienced, without mediating images and offers opportunities for exploration without closure, for endless *dérive*.

Kristin Ross, in her essay, *The Emergence of Social Space: Rimbaud and the Paris Commune*, uses Rimbaud's poem *Rêvé pour l'hiver* (1870) to touch on the spirit of the

Commune. In the poem a couple travel through a winter landscape enclosed in "a little pink railway carriage". Refusing to allow in the sensation of travel through landscape, the subject in closing her eyes surrenders "the domination of the look". She is estranged from the objective world and this enclosure heightens her imagination. In the final stanza:

> Then you will feel your cheek scratched...
> A little kiss, like a mad spider,
> Will run about your neck...
>
> And you'll say to me 'Find it!' bending your head,
> - And we'll take a long time to find that creature
> - Who travels far...

In closing off sight, the dominance of optical space is negated and the subject opens herself to a smooth space of haptic perception, experience is tactile, perceived to be close-to, un-mediatized. Transformations in relations are immediately sensed as clearly as a scratched cheek: "The word *égratignée* [scratched] signals the movement from *voir* to *faire*..."[23]

Whereas striated space relates objects via distanciation - concepts of separation, direction, perspective - smooth haptic space will not distance itself from experience but insists that one *no longer needs to see* the object - instead there is a will: "to be too close to it, to lose oneself without landmarks in smooth space".[24]

Poised thus, the "little spider/kiss" begins its *dérive* "along the microgeography of the woman's body".[25] A different geography is formulated, the spider/kiss is in motion, a subject exploring a unitary spatio-temporal zone, its "orientations, landmarks, and linkages ... in continuous variation; it operates step by step",[26] spatial and temporal relations remade with each move.

The spider/kiss moves on formulating a psychogeography which we are invited to follow in the exclamation:

> 'Cherche!' [Find it!].

This imperative is less a directive to find, more an invitation to the reader to join the spider/kiss in its ceaseless nomadic search. Like the instant rapportage of the Commune, its slang and caricatures, the command "Cherche!" acts as a Slogan. Rather than describing a conceptualised precise rationale, logically presenting cause and consequence within a pyramidal structure of meanings, the Slogan carries attitude, strategy and forms of mobility.[27] Its posture offers the possibility of remaking a smooth space of revolutionary urbanism. For, as the Communards demonstrated, it is in changing the physical structure of space that a revolutionary urbanism can be created.

The Communards' revolutionary urbanism re-valorises space. Whereas capitalist relations subscribe experience within a binary opposition of subject-object, sensual-

cerebral, labyrinth-pyramid; the mad 'spider/kiss' inserts a third term, showing us that although space may be reified it will always afford the possibility of subjective activity - the chance of *détournement*.

Space (as a third term) offers both subject and object in an incomplete unstable statement. While space offers a field of subjective expression, it is always defined by an objective constituent, towards which a subject must respond. The Communards' conception of space offers a paradoxical, incomplete unity of subject and object. The détourned plane of Jorn's *Modifications* is opened into three-dimensions.

Cherche! Rimbaud sets the reader into a revolutionary space. The smooth space of the situationists' unitary urbanism is realised by a change in posture and attitude. From a linear conception of use where objects are conceived for, and specified by, the work they perform; a space is created for free action, where the relations between space, objects and events continuously vary. The mad spider/kiss practices a child-like haptic geography:

> Children's cognition had revolutionary power because it was tactile, and hence tied to action, and because rather than accepting the given meaning of things, children got to know objects by laying hold of them and using them creatively, releasing from them new possibilities of meaning.[28]

Behaving thus, the spider/kiss simply and seriously *plays*.

Johan Huizinga, in his essay, *Homo Ludens: a Study of the Play Element in Culture*, argues that the significance of play is that it offers us a quality which stands outside of the rational constructs of man, a quality difficult to inscribe in language,[29] and yet the existence of which man cannot deny. "[T]he fun of playing, resists all analysis, all logical interpretation. As a concept, it cannot be reduced to any other mental category". Play "confirms the supra-logical nature of the human situation".[30]

In its play the mad spider/kiss recovers a sensual exploration of the Labyrinth.

ARCHITECTURE

The Communards' *détournement* of the city leaves its spatial structure compromised and unstable. The timeless fixity of monuments is thrown into question - for, transitory barricades always threaten to reappear. This instability is similar to that which Jorn's *Modifications* create - the *détournement* of an existing autonomous object, the city, creating an open zone of inter-subjective communication.

In his *Formulary for a New Urbanism* (1953)[31] Ivan Shcheglov outlined this permanently unstable urbanism where the city "would no longer be simply the locus of action but action itself".[32]

> The architecture of tomorrow will be a means of modifying present conceptions of time and space. It will be a means of knowledge and a means of action.[33]

The situationists argued that the development of technology stimulated by the demands of capitalist accumulation carried the means for a release from alienated

labour. Guy Debord recognised how technology could create "new forms of labyrinths" - continuously new environments for exploratory *dérive*. He cited the construction in New York, in 1955 of a "helicoidal" apartment house - the rooms of which could be augmented or diminished by moveable partitions which would expand and contract to model the desired psychogeographical ambience.[34]

Constant Nieuwenhuys developed his designs for *New-Babylon* (1962-3) from a similar understanding of the possibilities technology opened up for the creation of a playful revolutionary space.[35] For Constant, technology offered a material abundance which could liberate mankind from the requirements of alienated production:

> Automation of production means that man ceases to be a producer. He is no longer forced to be fixed, sedentary. His life can again become nomadic, as it was before Neolithic times. Independent of nature, he can create his entourage at will.[36]

The automation of production harbours the possibility of providing man with whatever he may want, wherever he may go. Technological development suggested a new principle of urbanisation "based on the socialisation of land and the means of production".[37] Thus, New Babylon was a provocation, opening the striated space of the existing city and offering in its place a model for a post-revolutionary urbanism "capable of developing a free environment".[38]

Constant conceived this new urbanism as a "network represent[ing] the traces left by [the Newbabylonians'] passage across the surface of the earth".[39] This was to be an 'unfunctional' network of 'covered unities' called 'sectors' raised above the earth above "extensive open green spaces where nobody lives and no buildings are to be found".[40] The nomadic Newbabylonians would create urbanised trails of pathways, links and stacked levels as they travelled between sectors. Technology would facilitate an intensity of space use and offer a "field of activity for each individual [with] practically no limits". A smooth nomadic space of moments and turns in contrast to the origins and exclusions of the traditional city:

> In New Babylon people would be constantly travelling. There would be no need for them to return to their point of departure as this in any case would be transformed.[41]

Space could be constructed and reconceived using a "quite chaotic arrangement of small and bigger spaces that are constantly mounted and dismounted by means of standardised mobile construction elements".[42] Technology would provide the material abundance to release man from labour and generate a spatial framework for his continuous playful *dérive*.

Here then is a megastructural conception of revolutionary space. There is a "random and non-hierarchical slotting of all functions" into a neutral framework which is created to provide the structural properties of "continuity, modular growth, and evenness of texture".[43] This framework is created to facilitate the spatial expression of whatever acts or desires mankind can imagine. In using a megastructure to mimic the character of revolutionary space the objective world is suppressed. Constant's models of New Babylon - their transparent perspex strata, wire lattice-work's, and metal folds - offer an arena for microgeographical exploration. A three-

dimensional *Naked City* is constructed, the radicalised subject flies through various ambient zones, deflected by "psychogeographical turntables" and itself deflecting, the surrounding constructions. The image is provocative, Constant's constructions act as Slogans opening one's perception to a different urban space - an indeterminate space of perpetual motion. However, the construction of similar 'neutral' megastructures in real space carries with it questions; of building control - the power structures which will inevitably inform this megastructural 'free-space' zone; and the quality of inter-subjectivity a neutral objective realm offers its users.

A year after exhibition of Constant's New Babylon, Joan Littlewood announced proposals for a *Palace of Fun* (1964) as part of a new Lea Valley Regional Park.[44] Similarly this promised to be "a laboratory of pleasure, providing room for many kinds of action",[45] to be used by some as "a university of the street", by others as "a latter-day Vauxhall Gardens where one might meet one's Nell Gwynne".[46] The Fun Palace was conceived as the "First Giant Space Mobile in the World",[47] its architect - Cedric Price - designing a framework which housed "ramps, moving walkways, catwalks and radial escalators", and allowed "multi-directional movement and random pedestrian grouping, yet was capable of being programmed".[48] As with New Babylon, advanced technologies were to create a new architectural idyll. "Charged static vapour zones, optical barriers, warm air curtains and fog dispersal plant ... together with vertical and horizontal lightweight blinds",[49] went together to create an ephemeral architecture, scheduled to last only ten years. The technologies would liberate the user - Price and Littlewood encouraging:

> no need to look for an entrance - just walk in anywhere. No doors, foyers, queues or commissionaires: its up to you how you use it... - try starting a riot or beginning a painting - or just lie back and stare at the sky.[50]

The Fun Palace offered a prototype of the post-revolutionary space the situationists dreamt about, and the situationist Alexander Trocchi adopted the Fun Palace as the model for his experimental situationist university.[51]

However, the concrete practicalities in Cedric Price's design point up the power relations built into the Palace. The ship-yard sized steel gantry assembly of demountable spaces would be serviced by a great slab-basement which provided staff circulation, piped services and escape routes. In operation, a privileged leisure class would stroll amongst the pleasurable diversions of the Palace while a great force of technical assistants worked behind the scenes rearranging spaces for the users' subjective preference (a similar leisure framework was subject to contemporary research in the designs for Disneyland). The inviting image of a technology which might facilitate whatever spatial requirements a subject may imagine and desire was called into question by the technology itself. Constant stressed that his New Babylon project was a provocative *model* for a post-revolutionary space - noting that "[t]he true builders of New Babylon will be the Newbabylonians themselves".[52] However as a project founded on the liberating possibilities of technology, the structures which were to design and administer this newly created libertarian space remained a separate power centre. The Fun Palace illustrates that *homo ludens* would remain served, or controlled, by *homo faber.*

This question of control is illustrated by Renzo Piano and Richard Rogers' *Centre Pompidou* (1971-75). A megastructural fragment built in Paris and dedicated by the architects to the same values of flexibility and libertarian use of space-use which informed the Fun Palace. Here, a flexible free-space architecture was built by the bureaucracy of the Third Republic. The bureaucratic attitude which informed this project is illustrated by the project administrator:

> Beaubourg is the meeting of the tastes and preoccupations of a president and the aspirations, still latent, of the French people.[53]

It is clear who will decide what the technologies of Beaubourg will engineer the public to aspire to. As with the great service plenum designed for the Fun Palace the technologies in Beaubourg require the invention of a new stratum of administration to plan the organisation of the building's flexible envelope. This neutral technological facilitator increases bureaucracy - the reification of lived experience through technology remains.

The Centre Pompidou also illustrates the problem of technical neutrality. The great 50 metre deep decks of Beaubourg replaced part of the mediaeval quarter of Les Halles - an area which had already come under psychogeographical scrutiny by the situationists in 1958.[54] In his research situationist Abdelhafid Khatib had identified the area as an already extant labyrinth of changing landscapes which could stimulate and perpetuate constructed situations.[55] Whereas the small spaces of mediaeval Paris offered a rich figurative canvas prepared for the *détournements* of a subjective user, the neutral technological space of Beaubourg is a plain abstract canvas on which the radicalised subject may leave traces but which will not provide a shared historical stimulus for inter-subjective communication.[56]

Technology and automation thus facilitate the radicalised subject's retreat from the public realm. A development which reaches its apotheosis in Archigram's work. Similarly preoccupied with technology as a facilitator for permissive free expression, the Archigram group also applied megastructural solutions attempting to create city structures that would yield to any individual desire. The group further pursued the themes of flexibility, adaptability, mobility and non-monumentality - their architecture cut loose from megastructural support systems. Thus, in David Green's *Suitaloon* (1968) and *Living Pod* (1966) projects, the architecture becomes an all-enveloping garment in which the user could travel and live in autonomous isolation. An image which illustrates the dangers of technological alienation inherent in Shcheglov's dream:

> The latest technological developments would make possible the individual's contact with cosmic reality while eliminating its disagreeable aspects. stars and rain can be seen through glass ceilings. The mobile house turns with the sun. Its sliding walls enable vegetation to invade life. Mounted on tracks, it can go down to the sea in the morning and return to the forest in the evening.[57]

Constant's conceptualisation of post-revolutionary space - offering technological release for the radicalised subject - while facilitating individual desires, does not create a shared objective world in which inter-subjective communication can take

place. Instead human experience becomes further reified by technology; further coerced by a new stratum of technocracy.

The alternative is a situationist urbanism operating within the existing structure of the city as an urban provocateur, appropriating space towards subjective ends. For Anthony Vidler, this suggests an architecture:

> no longer ... constructed out of the mental response of citizens subjected to the behavioural experiments of the architect, but now out of objects that themselves are occupied in continuous *dérive*.[58]

Vidler argues that John Hejduk offers just such a situationist architecture. Hejduk has created a band of architectural characters which he adapts or simply transposes from project to project and city to city in which he works:

> The cast presents itself to a city and its inhabitants. Some of the objects are built and remain in the city; some are dismantled and disappear; some are built, dismantled, and move on to another city where they are reconstructed[59]

Into the stable reified environment of the modern city he releases a set of "sociological-political"[60] types which pose the city certain, often uncomfortable, themes and memories. As with situationist *détournement* the architecture's role "derive[s] from the confrontation of a fixed content with an unfixed roving subject".[61]

In a series of "Masques" Hejduk proposes to change the behaviour of citizens with structures they are invited to use and inhabit. He argues that the modern city requires situations which question its fabric of assumptions:

> as it was necessary for the highly rational-pragmatic city of fifteenth century Venice to create masques, masks, masses for its time in order to function, it would appear that we of our time must create masques (programmes????) for our times.[62]

Hejduk's characters threaten, as they roll into the city, by offering programmes which may subvert the conception and production of city space privileged by society. For Vidler, this is a "vagabond architecture" that transforms the city "once more into an auto-critical artefact".[63]

In the production of his independence, the vagabond defies the social order, he rejects labour claiming a "right to laziness" and embraces a "radical mobility", bragging: "I have lived everywhere!". While the worker labours to overcome the means of his subjection, the vagabond is effortlessly mobile, operating only upon himself and under his own terms:

> Laziness, the refusal to make use of the body or turn it into a tool, is here linked to a kind of radical mobility. I have lived everywhere. I have lived many lives ... This is the impossible liberty of having exempted oneself from the organisation of work in a society that expropriates the very body of the worker.[64]

Similarly Hejduk's buildings claim their 'right to laziness'. They are content to repeat precise, almost regimental programmes, but always under their own terms -

regardless of the context in which they operate. Here then lies the threat of the vagabond, his way of life sits outside the mores of society and threatens an eventual violation of society's norms.

Successful as Hejduk's vagabonds appear on paper - constructing theoretical situations which *détourne* urban discourse towards poetic and subjective concerns - they carry little of the "potentiality of misdeed" which Kristin Ross values in vagabondage.[65] In comparison, the New Age vagabond culture of 'travelling' that has developed around Britain during the 1980s seems a much more politically potent form of spatial resistance. Rejecting the State, travellers have developed a countering life-style based around Summer Festivals. Less antithetical than ambivalent to the values of the State, travellers have suffered persistent harassment, and in Spring 1993, saw their lifestyle criminalised under amendments to the Public Order Act.[66] For Sadie Plant the travellers' nomadic lifestyle is a truly "radical gesture":

> The travellers' contempt for property rights, their autonomous forms of organisation and exchange, and their imaginative refusals of work, acceptable social identities, moral and legislative codes, constitute a threat which is magnified by their refusal of all tidy and conventional forms of social criticism.[67]

Despite the State's search to circumscribe their way of life within the terms of the Spectacle the travellers' political stance remains elusive while providing positive criticism of the values held by British society in the late twentieth century.[68]

Through their nomadism in real space the travellers provide a potency of social criticism which Hejduk's paper vagabonds cannot match. A comparison of these two vagabonds - the human and the architectural illustrates the limits of architecture as a revolutionary project. While human action is immediate, the architectural is always an objectification of social ideas. For Bernard Tschumi:

> Architecture is the adaptation of space to the existing social structures. No spatial organisation ever changes the socio-economic structure of a reactionary society.[69]

Architecture can use techniques of *rhetorical action* and *counterdesign* to express and catalyse the environmental crisis developing under late capitalism and Tschumi continues to argue that the "only possible architectural action of a revolutionary nature is rhetorical".[70] Hejduk's is a form of counterdesign - using provocateurs to "demystify and discredit the architectural daydream under its own terms"[71] - and is therefore restricted to countering the discipline of architecture, itself lying inactive within the structure of society.

Under Tschumi's analysis the traveller's way of life can be seen as rhetorical action - in that it acts as an expression and catalysis of the environmental crisis. However, the travellers 'right to laziness' precludes the rhetorical dimension which Tschumi argues is necessary for politically active architecture. Citing the "guerrilla architecture" tactics of the Beaux Arts Atelier UP6, Tschumi argues that their seizure and reconstruction of a barn as shelter for immigrant workers in 1971 was socially useless because the students acted *for* the people not *with* the people. However their action succeeded politically when they renamed the barn *La Maison du Peuple* and the

French press were alerted to squalor in which these immigrant workers had been living.[72] The space created by UP6 was neutral - it was only in its specific signification as a "house of the people" that the building attained political meaning and raised the political issue of housing rights.[73]

Although some factions of the travelling community have made rhetorical transgressions of space,[74] travellers more usually protect their 'self-sufficient' independence from mainstream society. Whether travellers refrain from action as a resistance to society's recuperations - a radical gesture avoiding State decompression of their resistance into terms circumscribed under the terms of the Spectacle - or if they have simply 'dropped out'; their 'right to laziness' precludes participation in inter-subjective communication. Although the travellers *détourne* social space, questioning society's presumptions about its social use, they are not interested in the results their *détournement* has on society as a whole - nor in whether it opens up a shared realm for inter-subjective communication. However, their criticism-by-example remains potent. Hejduk's architectural provocateurs occupy a 'paper-space' and it is in their architect's insistence on the value of paper architecture that he claims his 'right to laziness' and concomitantly lessens the value of his criticism in the *real* space of society. The Travellers occupy real space and time, creating an independent society run in parallel with conventional society, a much more powerful provocation.

CONCLUSION

The city is an "inscription of man in space"[75]; both a discursive language of monuments and architectures and a framework within which we formulate our own *particular* meanings, memories, dreams and understandings. Through the practice of psychogeography and the *dérive* the situationists attempted to *détourne* the city's generalised discursive framework of understanding. Psychogeography catalogues the movements and images with which people particularise space - externalising these private transgressions into the public realm. The situationist attributed Slogan: *Under the cobble-stones, lies the beach...*[76] demonstrates this attitude suggesting; that inches away, to be obtained by the smallest of deflections, we may uncover a rich primeordial landscape; and; in May 1968, that the action of tearing up cobble-stones to use as projectiles, in itself, affirms the presence of the leisure-beach beneath.

In the revolutionary space created in the Paris Commune (1871) and in *Les èvènements* (May 1968), the situationists valued brief periods when the creative poise of *détournement* momentarily gained ascendancy and society's space-use was radically transformed. The image of Rimbaud's 'mad spider/kiss' illustrates the new nomadic microgeography which re-valorised the city-space of Paris. Conceptual reifications - of separation, direction, perspective - which striate our understanding of space, fall away. Instead, the mad spider/kiss moves in a haptic zone - its reference points and spatial relations continually re-made and re-assessed with each movement and spatial discovery. The spider/kiss is in continuous motion through the sensual Labyrinth and must ceaselessly reformulate meanings and relations between itself and the environment. Thus, in its continuous search and re-creation

of existential possibilities the spider/kiss is fully alive. situationist psychogeography carries this attitude to space, a will to *Cherche!* For the psychogeographer:

> Men can see nothing around them that is not their own image; everything speaks to them of themselves. Their very landscape is alive.[77]

Here then is the poise from which the Situationist International attempt to inform our conception of space. Space offers a medium of experience which is never fully objective or subjective but which always contests both and offers both, in an incomplete and unstable statement. Space offers a field for subjective expression and is always defined by an objective constituent towards which the subjective will must respond. With a situationist poise we may creatively explore labyrinthine space, inspecting and détourning architectures, discovering and privileging subjective responses to enliven the existential meaning of our environment.

How then does one apply this situationist poise to the architectural pyramid?

The projects we have discussed have attempted to create a *dérivist* architecture either, in Constant's *Neo-Babylon*, by seeking to trace out the path of the post-revolutionary nomad or, with Hejduk, by making the architectural object itself the roving *dérivist*. Each acts as an architectural reification. The architectures are liberated as they formulate situationist spatial relations, but this ludic architecture does not carry a concomitant freedom for the inhabitant. Hejduk's self-absorbed buildings only become a potent critique of city-space if a body obeys the narrative scenario inscribed within his masques. As these remain paper projects this seems unlikely to occur. We have explored the technocratic power structures which entangle the nearest built approximation to *Neo-Babylon* - *Centre Pompidou* offering a rhetorical image of free-space while crushing the fine-grained labyrinthine reality beneath its 50 metre spans.

Instead of paraphrasing situationist strategies in plays of forms, architecture should attempt to offer a representational framework through which people themselves may creatively stray. Rather than attempting to fix the architectonics of the mad spider/kiss or trace its pathways, architects should follow the New Age Travellers and make its critical poise their own.

Cherche! Spider/kiss architectures would live lithe - travelling across the city in haptic delerium. Theirs would be an architecture based on a close-to creative looking. Instead of seeking technocratic solutions or creating individual reactions to the city this could be an architecture that is engaged with the existing material culture. Which creatively re-reads and re-valorises the environment, affirming the particularities of each space and providing a representational framework within which people may construct their own situations.

Notes

1 Franz Kafka, A Little Fable, cited in Hanna Fenichel Pitkin, Rethinking Reification, Theory and Society 16, (1987), p. 263.

2 Michel Foucault, Of Other Spaces: Utopias and Heterotopias, in Joan Ockman, Ed., Architecture Culture 1943-1968: a Documentary Anthology, (New York: Columbia Books of Architecture/Rizzoli, 1993), p. 418.

3 Alastair Bonnett, Situationism, Geography and Poststructuralism, Environment and Planning D: Society and Space 7, (1989), p. 143.

4 Denis Hollier, La Prise de la Concorde, Translated by Betsy Wing as, Against Architecture: The Writings of Georges Bataille, (Camb., Mass.: MIT Press, 1989). p. 61.

5 Ibid, p. 58.

6 Georges Bataille, Le Labyrinthe, cited by Hollier, Ibid, p. 57.

7 Hollier, Ibid, p. 69.

8 Ibid, p. 73.

9 Ibid, p. 71. One might understand the relationship as follows:

Labyrinth	'threshold of language'	Pyramid
non-substantive	'to be'	substantive

Denis Hollier notes Michel Foucault's observation that 'the verb is the indispensable condition of all discourse,' and that 'the entire verbal species can be reduced to the single one that signifies: to be.' Hollier understands the verb 'to be' as having no meaning but only a function - 'to allow meaning to be produced by an interplay of attribution, by relating words to each other'. It is in the relation of elements that language is substantiated. Thus being stands on the threshold between incoherence and substantiation - between Labyrinth and Pyramid. It is at this threshold of meaning that the situationists discovered a position from which to criticise the Spectacle. See Hollier, Op cit, p. 66.

10 Ibid, p. 61.

11 Guy Debord and Gil Wolman, Methods of Détournment, in Ken Knabb. Ed., The Situationist International Anthology, (Berkeley: Bureau of Public Secrets, 1981), p. 10.

12 Asger Jorn, On Détourned Painting, in Elisabeth Sussman, Ed., On the Passage of a few people through a rather brief moment in time: the Situationist International 1957-1972, (Camb., Mass. MIT Press, 1991). p. 140.

13 Ibid, p. 142.

14 Peter Wollen, The Situationist International. New Left Review 174, (March/April 1989), pp. 90.

15 Greil Marcus, Lipstick Traces: A Secret History of the Twentieth Century, (Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1989), p. 164.

16 Guy Debord, Theory of the Dérive IS #2, (December 1958), in Knabb, Op cit, p. 51.

17 See Thomas F. McDonough, Situationist Space. October 67 (1994). pp. 59-77.

18 Situationist International, Definitions SI #1, (1959), Knabb, Ed., Op cit, p. 45.

19 Debord, Kotányi, Vaneigem, Theses on the Paris Commune, in Knabb Ed., Op cit, p. 315.

20 Cluseret, Mémoires du Général Cluseret, vol. II, (Paris: Jules Levy, 1887), cited by Kristin Ross, The Emergence of Social Space: Rimbaud and the Paris Commune, (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1988), .p. 37.

21 Brian Massumi, Translators Forward, to Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia, translated by Brian Massumi, (London: The Athlone Press, 1988), p. xiii.

22 Deleuze and Guattari, Ibid. p. 371, (The emphasis is mine).

23 Ross, Ibid, p. 35.

24 Deleuze and Guattari, Op cit, p. 493.

25 Ross, Op cit, p. 35.

26 Deleuze and Guattari, Op cit, p. 493.

27 Consider the centre forward Eric Cantona at work on that most serious of ludic zones, the professional football field. Proud of his Romany origins, with Rimbaud as guide, Cantona lays claim to the smooth space of vagabond

football . Misunderstood in his own country, the 'Superbrat' of French football travels first to Leeds and, restless, on to Manchester United. A 'tricky-user', his is a football of one-touch détournements - back-flicks and angled runs which deflect the flow of the leaden, utilitarian English game towards a more sensual continental style. The knocks, lobs, taps and curves open up chances and therefore both the possibility of success and failure. But in a game currently stricken by percentage passing and 'the long-ball' the joy for supporters of MUFC is that Cantona always creates possibilities.

28 Susan Buck-Morss, The Dialectics of Seeing: Walter Benjamin and the Arcades Project, (Camb., Mass.: MIT Press, 1989), p. 264.

29 Johan Huizinga, Homo Ludens: a Study of the Play Element in Culture, (London: Temple Smith, 1970). p. 21.

30 Ibid., p. 22.

31 Ivan Shcheglov, Formulary for a new Urbanism, in Ken Knabb. Ed., Situationist International Anthology, (Berkeley: Bureau of Public Secrets, 1981), pp. 1-4.

32 Kenneth G. Hay, The Situation of Deconstructions: Ivan Shcheglov as a precursor of deconstruction, ISSUES: in Theory & Practice of Architecture, Art & Design 1, Spring, 1990, p. 10.

33 Shcheglov, Op cit, p. 2.

34 Guy Debord, Theory of the Dérive, IS #2, (1958), in Ken Knabb, Ed., Situationist International Anthology, (Berkeley: Bureau of Public Secrets, 1981), p. 54.

35 Constant resigned from the Situationist International in 1960 when its programme shifted to exclusively political activities. However his New Babylon project continued to develop around the ideas of Unitary Urbanism which had developed during his connections with the SI.

36 Constant, Auto-Dialogue on New Babylon, Opus International 27, (undated), p. 80.

37 Ibid.

38 Ibid.

39 Ibid.

40 Constant Nieuwenhuys, New-Babylon/An urbanism of the future, Architectural Design (London), (June 1964), p. 305.

41 Ibid.

42 Ibid.

43 Alan Colquhoun, Frames to Frameworks, In Alan Colquhoun, Essays in Architectural Criticism: Modern Architecture and Historical Change, (Camb., Mass.: MIT Press, 1985), p. 121.

44 Anon, Lea Valley Regional Park, Architectural Journal, (29, July, 1964), p. 253.

45 Joan Littlewood and Cedric Price, A Laboratory of Fun, New Scientist (London), (14, May 1964), p. 432.

46 Anon, Op. cit.

47 Terence Bendixson, Palaces are for Fun, Architectural Design 34, (1964), p. 533.

48 Cedric Price, Op cit., p. 433.

49 Ibid.

50 J.S. Joan Littlewood's Fun Palace Project. Architectural Association Journal (September/October 1964). p. 81.

51 The Experimental University would offer an 'experimental situation as a kind of shadow reality of the future existing side by side with the present 'establishment'. See Alexander Trocchi, INVISIBLE INSURRECTION of a Million Minds, and SIGMA a Tactical Blueprint, Architectural Association Journal, (June 1964), p. 28.

52 Constant Nieuwenhuys, Auto-Dialogue on New Babylon, Op cit, p. 80.

53 Claude Mollard, L'enjeu du Centre Georges Pompidou, (Paris, 1976), quoted by Alan Colquhoun, Plateau Beaubourg, In Colquhoun, Op cit, p. 110

54 Abdelhafid Khatib, Essai de description psychogéographique des Halles IS #2, (December 1958), pp. 13-17.

55 See Alastair Bonnett, Art, Ideology and Everyday Space: Subversive Tendencies from Dada to Postmodernism, Environment and Planning D: Society and Space 10, (1991), p. 77.

56 Beaubourg thus shut down the possibilities the situationists predicted for Les Halles as a revolutionary stronghold. It is therefore ironic that it was in Beaubourg on the razed site of their labyrinthine Les Halles, that the situationists saw an exhibition of their recuperated work in the Spring of 1989. See G. Maragliano, The Invisible Insurrection, Flash Art 147, (1989), pp. 87-90.

57 Shcheglov, Op cit, p. 2.

58 Anthony Vidler, Vagabond Architecture, in Vidler, The Architectural Uncanny: Essays in the Modern

Unhomely, (Camb., Mass.: MIT Press, 1992), p. 213-4.

59 John Hejduk, Vladivostok, quoted by Vidler, Ibid, p. 207.

60 John Hejduk, Conversation With a Wall, in Kim Shkapich, Ed., John Hejduk: the Mask of Medusa: Works 1947-1983, (New York: Rizzoli, 1985), p. 125.

61 Vidler, Op cit, p. 210.

62 John Hejduk, Berlin Masque, in Shkapich, Ed., Op cit., p. 152, (Hejduk's question marks).

63 Vidler, Op cit., p. 210.

64 Kristin Ross, The Emergence of Social Space: Rimbaud and the Paris Commune, (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1988), p. 60.

65 Ross, Op cit., see Chapter 2: The Right to Laziness, pp. 47-74.

66 See Tony Marcus, Summer of Chaos, i-D 119, (August 1993), pp. 78-95.

67 Sadie Plant, The Most Radical Gesture: The Situationist International in a Postmodern Age, (London: Routledge, 1992), p. 125.

68 As The Independent notes: 'New Age travellers are developing a culture characterised by anti-materialism, craft-work, music and a passion for freedom and open spaces. It is a way of life that stands in direct opposition to mainstream British culture in the 90s'. Quoted by Marcus, Op cit., p. 85.

69 Tschumi. Bernard, The Environmental Trigger, in James Gowan, Ed., A Continuing Experiment: Learning and Teaching at the Architectural Association, (London: The Architectural Press, 1975), p. 93.

70 Ibid.

71 Ibid, p. 95.

72 See Martin Pawley and Bernard Tschumi, The Beaux Arts since '68, Architectural Design, (September 1971), p. 533.

73 Tschumi, Op cit., p. 93-94.

74 An example is The Battle of the Bean Field at the 1985 Stonehenge Festival, fought against the police over the 'right' to celebrate the Summer Solstice on the actual site of the stones. See Marcus, Op cit., p. 83.

75 Roland Barthes, Semiology and Urbanism, in Joan Ockman, Ed., Architecture Culture 1943-1968: a Documentary Anthology, (New York: Columbia Books of Architecture/Rizzoli, 1993), p. 414.

76 I love you...

...ooh, say it with cobblestones.

77 Karl Marx, cited by Guy Debord, Theory of the Dérive, Op cit., in Chapter Three: Détournement, footnote 26.

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An Account of Some Experimental Dérive in Newcastle-upon Tyne

by James Burch

The aim of this exercise was to ascertain how difficult it might be to get lost in a city. A game is played to explore city-space and discover where its physical and social limits lie. Eighteen people mostly architecture students volunteered to drift around Newcastle following some rules which circumscribed their movement and goals.

aims:

The aim was to discover what qualities a psychogeographical analysis could extract from city-space, and also to see how difficult it is for people to lose themselves in their surrounding environment. To this ends, an attempt was made to détourne the mapping systems people use to order their movement through the city.

method:

A small group of people are asked to walk around Newcastle orientating themselves by a diagram of the Berlin metro-system. The choice of map is arbitrary, it operates as a 'tool', aiding the dérivist to reconceive the city - it is simply one of the rules in this game.

programme:

invitations were distributed to rendezvous at specified places and specified times in Newcastle.

at the rendezvous, volunteers are asked to undertake the experiment with an attitude of 'serious play' - to enjoy it but take it seriously.

two people choose a destination at random from a list of Berlin U-Bahn stations. The group decide they are already at one of these stations.

a member of the group volunteers to lead. This first 'dérivist" [drifter] is given a Berlin U-Bahn map and asked to take us between to the destinations the group have randomly chosen. The group follow, with no knowledge of where the dérivist will take them.

use of the map: The map user is instructed that the map is to any scale (s)he

wishes to designate and that it may map whatever qualities in the surrounding environment the user may think is relevant. His/Her interpretation of the map does not have to remain constant either. It is explained that the map is simply an aid in the spatial re-conception of the city.

the group follow the dérivist until (s)he decides that they have arrived at their destination.

the dérivist stands at the destination and completes a questionnaire.

the 'following group' are drawn to one side and asked to find a word they feel is appropriate to this new surroundings. They are asked to retain this word in their memory.

through discussion the following group develop a phrase or an image to describe the place.

the dérivist, having completed the questionnaire, makes a mark/graffiti on an actual map of Newcastle. The 'following group' shout out their individual word-images of the place - the random association of these words sparks off the rhetorical détournement of the map.

A new destination in Berlin is chosen, a new dérivist leads the group towards his/her subjective U-Bahn stop ...

construction of the questionnaire:

The questionnaire was as follows:

Standing still, look up & around and then answer the following questions.

Please give a preferred name for yourself

(1) Describe where you are:
I am
I feel
I want to

(2) Describe who you see:
They are
They feel
I want them to

(3) What do you believe of this place:

(S)He/It is
(please delete as necessary)

(4) *Quiet* is

The questionnaire asked two sets of questions which required one to make statements about being (I am, they are...), feeling (I/they feel...), and will to act (I want [them] to...). The first questions asked about one's sense of one's self within the environment the second set, about one's sense of a relation to others. The third question asked one

to state if one had a sense of an Other-worldy spirit in the space and asked one to state its gender and character. A fourth question asks the dérivist to react to the quality of Quiet the surrounding environment may or may not have.

(1) Self-to-self: I am... I feel... I want to...

(2) Self-to other: They are... They feel... I want them to...

(3) Self-to-Other: (S)He/It is...

(4) Quality: *Quiet* is...

Account of the Dérives:

The following is a brief account of some of the points of interest in each of the experiments.

DRIFT 1

3 p.m. 28, October 1993. Rendezvous: Zone Gallery, Westgate Road.

Initially the Alexanderplatz junction of the map, central on the page, had been circled and dérivists were asked to point to anywhere on the map and orientate themselves back to 'A'. This had the effect of centring the dérive around known monuments. Dérivists with extensive knowledge of Newcastle tended to gravitate towards centres of explicitly public meaning. Thus, Matthew and Collis, residents of Newcastle for over three years, headed for Grey's Monument - a civic square, and the Bigg market, respectively. While Rocinante, a newcomer, already 'lost' in the city, found his, this time, de-monumentalised Alexanderplatz in the entrance of a disused shop by a busy road junction.

Rocinante's mapping technique was of interest. He controlled his route by gauging the breadth and 'speed' of the diagrammatic U-Bahn lines, and transposed this sense of weight and rhythm into his route choice. Thus as the number of lines surrounding 'A" increased 'R' chose wider and busier highways.

DRIFT 2

3 p.m. 29, October 1993. Rendezvous: Newcastle Law Courts, The Quayside.

Random choice of stations is introduced to counteract the monumentalisation of the map technique. This, and the area of Newcastle explored - the Quayside - a less well known area of dereliction, make for a successful dérive.

The agenda which one carries to this exercise becomes apparent. J.O.H. takes us to her Alexanderplatz. The map orientated her towards the interior of the Law Courts but a locked door barred her path - although it was obvious the courts were still working. We thus met a concretised social barrier. However, if J.O.H. had been aware of the Situationist political narratives carried within psychogeography, would she have tried harder to get into the Courthouse?

We experienced a transgressive 'frisson' as Anon. took us behind some abandoned

workshops into her Lichtenrade - a gluesniffing den.

DRIFT 3

3 p.m. 1, November 1993. Rendezvous: the Gateshead side of the Swing Bridge.

Only one person appears at the rendezvous point, it is -1 degrees C., the dérive is abandoned.

DRIFT 4

3 p.m. 4 November 1993. Rendezvous: Central Station Entrance Portico.

At the suggestion of Alastair we begin to assign crypto-Situationist names to the zonal ambiences of our destinations. During this dérive we therefore pass through the 'Zone of Misery and Death', into the 'Calm before the Storm', through a treacherous 'Slippery Zone', into a 'Zone of Mental Dementia', ending at the 'Zone of Crylogenia'.

Sancho took the mapping détournement in a new direction. taking the image of the U-Bahn stop Königs Westerhausen (not actually the randomly chosen U-Bahn stop designated as his goal - a little internal détournement on his part) as his destination. He then searches Gateshead for a spatial geography to match his mental image - a space he imagined as a broad flat plain with little detail. After a mile and a half walk we finds his imagined Königs Westerhausen, at a roundabout.

Alastair, equipped with psychogeographical political agendas, takes us on a more transgressive turn. Asking whether anyone has yet entered a building, he immediately enters a church hall. There is an uncomfortable feeling as we walk silently through a social club for elderly mentally ill. He finds Rathaus Steglitz inside Gateshead Tesco's.

DRIFT 5

3 p.m. 6, November 1993. Copthorne Hotel, The Close on Newcastle quay.

The random play of arbitrary destinations in Berlin and different subject's dérive allows us to get lost in the same place. Successive dérivists lead us around different routes to within one hundred yards of each other.

Conclusion

These experiments have set up the rules of a simple urban game. It might last one or forty-eight hours, hard and fast, or slow and leisurely, with whatever agendas one might wish to take to it. Try it out and contact **Transgressions** with your own findings.

FANTASY ISLAND

by David Bell

Does the travelling between places exist more than the actual places themselves?

(Institute of Fatuous Research, 1990)

The Everyday: what is most difficult to discover

(Blanchot, 1987)

Everyday journeys are often ignored: merely getting from A to B and back again: to work, to the shops, through our own homes. These daily rituals pass unnoticed, instantly forgotten. Ever found yourself at your destination, unable to recall getting there? [Only the Grand Tours of our holidays, our protests marches, our infrequent trips on different trains remain in our minds, or captured on film.] Everyday journeys that take up so much of our time; everyday journeys during which we move through so much space; a thousand miles, a thousand hours.

The everyday, established and consolidated, remains a sole surviving common sense referent and point of reference.

(Lefebvre, 1987)

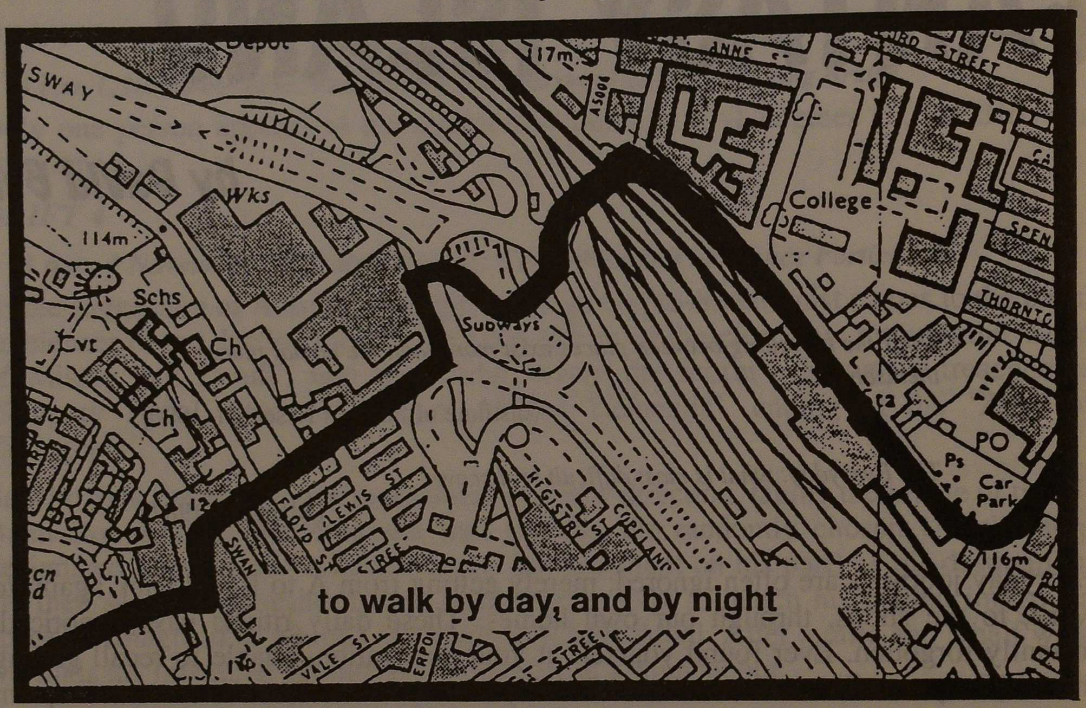
My everyday journey: focus on negotiating a subway, while traffic circles a giant roundabout. The causeway to the City: a pedestrian artery cut through by a stretch of canal - meeting of routes and ages. Finding in that journey a magical place; my fantasy island.

Like words, places are articulated by a thousand usages ... They form a rhetoric of space.

(de Certeau, 1985)

The subway on a summer's day: in the tunnels, always the view of sunlight at either end: pleasant cool in hot times. Chip papers flap from a thousand nights before. Pools of piss and puke to avoid, but easily avoided. A good place to whistle - a sharp echo made sharper by the canal, which cuts the subway. Longboats pass, now crewed only by holidaymakers, happy in their beer mugs and already making memories with a camera; their relaxed passage annoying only those few fishermen huddled with their empty keep-nets. Graffiti to read, always changing: subversive palimpsest. The surreal nonsense of half-finished or half-covered messages, spelling mistakes. Twilight fly-posters for small-time bands and sad circuses; political slogans of every persuasion.

five minutes everyday, each way



Pink concrete stained. A hundred cigarette ends. Constantly changing juxtaposition of sharp angles: the subway's modern geometry. Fellow subway-walkers smile, whisper greetings, also whistle. And in the roundabout's midst, an incongruous oasis of greenery: fantasy island. Trees, grass, dog-walkers and sometime sunbathers. Birdsong over the traffic's moan. The smell of newcut grass, the laughs of council workers tending dilapidated trees. Old signposts on the central footpath turned round, defaced, broken off. Misinformation for strangers. Time to lean on the canal-bridge, reflect on the water below. Make comments on the weather, remember scenes from movies. I look back and can see our home.

The subway becomes a site of ludic fantasy: so many chewed sticks on the path betray the dog-walkers' days of fun (and the dogs'). Or to just sit and read the morning paper, to drink pop and catch some sun. By the canal. In winter the water frozen, kids daring each other to walk over, or throwing brick-bits to crack it. The workers keep walking, past the fun fair of fantasy island, the bike-riding round the path, the couple kissing in the shade of the weeping willow, the old man with his Sporting Life and bookie's tab. The footfalls of a hundred soft-shoe commuters a day, each walking his or her own lines, each taking a route through fantasy island. Familiar and unfamiliar faces pass. Sketch a way on a map; that's the traces of our lives.

Then back into the cool dampness of the out-tunnel, almost a mirror of the way in. Up steps, swerving to avoid BMXers hurtling down the ramp. And up onto street level, back to noise, fumes, back to the City. The subway as also route to the railway station: hurried through by soon-to-be train-travellers, their minds filled with the bigger journeys to come, their arms aching from too-full suitcases. On a raining day

the start and end of the subway trip as moments to dry; the tunnels to stand in, a congregation of travellers hoping not to stay wet; sharing out cigarettes.

A flickering moment, then: the fantasy of tranquillity, of a pastoral break in the bricks-and-concrete metropolis. Fantasy island.

Notes

1 An earlier version of this snapshot has also been published as part of a diptych, 'Fantasy Island/Panic Subway', in *Landscape Research* 17 (1992) pp.72-73. Thanks to Alastair Bonnett for witty criticism. This paper bears no relation, but nevertheless pays homage, to Gregory Woods' chapter 'Fantasy Islands: popular topographies of marooned masculinity', in David Bell and Gill Valentine (Eds), *Mapping Desire* (Routledge, 1995).

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Manchester's 'Village in the City':

The Gay Vernacular in a Post-industrial Landscape of Power.

by Steve Quilley

Introduction

In the 1980s Manchester emerged as one of the principal centres for gay culture in Britain. The city's 'Gay Village' has a spatial coherence as a gay 'place' that is significantly absent in other comparable urban areas. This development has been closely connected to, and implicated in, a wider explosion of youth culture based on an innovative and energetic club scene: *Mad*chester.

Over the same period, in the face of massive (and, in part, orchestrated) de-industrialisation, the political culture of the dominant Labour Party has gone through a series of shifts. The emergence of the *Village* has been very much bound up with the changing fortunes of Manchester's 'new urban left' and the transformation of the city's Labour administration under Graham Stringer.

My concern is to document the changing relationship between the Town Hall and the Village. I suggest that, from playing a role in a wider discourse of resistance to Thatcherism, the gay presence in the city has, since 1987, been increasingly incorporated into a post-modern narrative of cosmopolitan diversity. The gay community[1] in Manchester has been able, at times, and in the face of concerted opposition, to appropriate space. But, inscribing its own vernacular into a landscape of power constructed largely under the aegis of a strategy of property-led redevelopment, the aesthetic of the gay scene has become articulated into a wider 're-imaging' of the city around the familiar themes of European style cafes, pedestrian streets and arcades and a central role for leisure and cultural activities. Despite the overt support of the ruling Labour group from 1984, the Village was only recognised as a planning entity and specifically as a *gay* place, in 1991. But the Village is now a phenomenon which figures in the calculations of the planners, boosters and pundits of the New Manchester: City of Leisure, Pleasure and Plastic Money.

The Conservative Party's third victory in June 1987 effectively brought an end to the experiment in 'local socialism' (Lansley *et al*, 1989; Cooper 1994). Since then the municipal lesbian and gay project has largely been reversed, as Labour councils have

retreated in the face of electoral and financial constraints. However it is my contention that, in Manchester, the apparently small gains made by gay activists, during the period of municipal socialism, paved the way for the subsequent expansion, consolidation and commercialisation of the Village. Whilst lesbian and gay issues have, to an extent, been squeezed off the formal agenda of local government, the council continues to sponsor the Village as an enduring and legitimate feature of the emerging post-industrial cultural-economic landscape. A 'political-institutional' presence in the city has been traded for a more pervasive, cultural-aesthetic presence, in which the community is organised as a market rather than a political constituency.

There is a growing literature relating to the role of gay communities in the restructuring of urban space (Castells, 1983; Lauria and Knopp 1985; Adler and Brenner 1992) However, in many cases, a narrow emphasis on the "interests, actions and desires" of gay men (Whittle, 1994, p.43), underplays the broader context of political economy. The construction of gay places in the partially abandoned space of the inner city, is bound up with economic and political processes which extend far beyond the agency of gay men. For instance, an economics of decline can produce opportunities for gay men in terms of gentrifiable stock. The post-keynesian climate of competition, which pits city against city, can lead to the re-evaluation of gay space by policy makers, from regulatory problem, to marketing asset; a contribution to the leisure economy. Existing commentaries on Manchester's Village do little to specify these "driving economic and social forces" (Hindle, 1994, p.22). Whittle locates his discussion of the commercial scene in the city, uncomfortably, in terms of a "post-capitalist straight world" and a rather undifferentiated notion of the state (Whittle, 1994, p.39). My intention is to re-assess the development of the Village in terms of the changing economic fortunes, forms and functions of Manchester as a *capitalist* city. My main focus is the political and economic project of the local Labour council and its reponses to these changing conditions. I want to argue that the imperatives of the entrepreneurial city (Harvey, 1987) have had as much to do with developments in the Village as changing aspirations within the gay community.

I) Before the Village

In the 1950s and 1960s gay social life was organised around informal 'coteries' in pubs.[2] The social scene was highly localised, ignored rather than tolerated in any active sense, secretive and deferential. The relative invisibility of homosexual lives was reflected in the predominant 'pre-gay' homosexual identity: private, individualist, non-transgressive and rooted in sexual desire (Watney, 1993; 1994). This orientation was reflected in the political campaign in the build-up to the 1967 reform. The reform movement avoided being represented as an abrasive 'gay campaign', focusing rather on issues such as blackmail. This allowed supporters to present homosexuals as victims who needed help and understanding rather than criminalisation.

The first recognition from within the Campaign for Homosexual Equality (CHE) of the need to move beyond the lifting of legal constraints to the pro-active creation of meeting places - an institutionalised social scene - was the Esquire Club's initiative[3] (1972-73). This foundered partly due to the fact that the breweries were apprehensive about the moral backlash. However, Horsfall associates the wide public debate with

the subsequent gradual acceptance of the idea of gay clubs and men dancing with each other.

> I think the whole exercise probably changed the police's attitude towards Gay clubs - we didn't have any more of this nonsense about men dancing together ... so far as I know.[4]

The Esquire Club's initiative was a political-institutional attempt to produce gay space. Although it failed it did pave the way for gay clubs in the commercial scene to become well established by the end of the seventies. This was perhaps the first manifestation, in the emergent gay culture, of the tension between the politics of gay liberation and the commercial 'scene'.

Clearly, over the course of the 1970s, changes in gay identity were symbiotically linked both to the limited legalisation of gay society and the expanding opportunities of the commercial scene, but also to public assertions of collective strength; a visible and overtly transgressive gay politics. However, even by the early 1980s, neither the politics of Gay Lib. nor the commercial club scene had effected the transition from institutionalised *sociability* to institutionalised *visibility*. Thus Weightman, writing in 1980, characterised the gay bar as a 'private place' which 'carries few clues declaring its nature'. She summarised its architectural features in terms of:

- location in marginal areas (red light areas, skid row, renewal areas etc.);
- the presentation of an inconspicuous, windowless and uninviting image;
- an emphasis on restricting accessibility through the use of internal partitions, notices and messages (Weightman, 1980, p.13).

A decade later gay culture in Manchester has appropriated the street, inviting both inspection and participation. The 1994 August bank holiday carnival in the Village attracted over 40,000 people and raised close to £40,000 for the Village Charity. The Village has transformed a marginal area into the fulcrum of the city's night-time economy (Lovatt, 1994). The theatrical aesthetic of the Cafe-Bar finds its ultimate expression in Manto. Whereas in the traditional pubs favoured by the gay coterie of previous generations, the introverted and cramped privacy of frosted windows, partitions and intimate corners ward off inspections and intrusions from the censoring eyes of straight society, Cafe-Bars such as *Manto*, with their goldfish bowl windows magnify and underline a gay presence, inviting scrutiny. They demand attention.

II) The Emergence of the Village

> The great strength of the Village is its compactness. Stand on the corner where Bloom street crosses Sackville Street and you're within 100 paces of ten gay clubs and pubs, not to mention gay doctors, restaurants, charities and shops. (*The Pink Guide 1993/4*).[5]

The Gay Village is a not a ghetto. It is rather a "gay developed space" (Fraser and Evans 1993, p.12)[6] - deliberately constructed as an enclave: a shelter from the intolerance, petty prohibitions and violence of straight society. The establishment of

the Village involved the appropriation of space through the imbrication of a regular pattern of social relations replete with meanings which structure the details of social interaction for gay and straight alike. The uniqueness of the Village lies in the fact that these patterns have moved out of discrete basement bars, onto the street and into the public space between the bars, creating a bubble in which different rules and conventions are accepted.

This re-socialisation of space has not only benefited gay men. Due to its proximity to the bus station, its lack of street lighting and generally sleazy nature, one might have expected nearby Portland Street to inspire 'routine anxieties in respect of public space' . But in fact, in a survey of public attitudes, Taylor *et al* found that the street was seen to be one of the safest in the city centre, primarily as a result of its proximity to the Village.

> A potentially fearful and unsafe area has been made more attractive to others for whom the area was not primarily intended. (Taylor *et al*, 1993, p.32)

However, this transformation has not been achieved easily. Whilst the Labour Council had funded a gay centre in Bloom Street since the late 1970s, the City Labour Party was hardly a model of progressive thinking.[7] It took a sustained period of political lobbying by gay activists (part of a wider cultural revolution initiated by the municipal left) before the Village became a legitimate and aspect of Manchester's economic and cultural fabric; something the council would advertise as a positive asset.

Gay Activism and Manchester's New Urban Left

By the end of the 1970s gay activity had contracted and became concentrated on just a few locales in central Manchester. The Bloom Street area emerged as the main anchor point for the scene because there was more physical stability and it was less commercially volatile. Paradoxically the recession of the early 1980s increased this stability. As in other major industrial cities, the conflict between the Labour-controlled local authority, committed to contesting and reversing the dramatic de-industrialisation which had ravaged the local economy, and a central government wedded to real-estate and finance interests, resulted in a policy vacuum. The local authority resisted government initiatives but did not have the resources to implement an alternative strategy. The deadlock simply resulted in stagnation. Central Manchester seemed locked into a downward spiral of economic decline. With a negligible residential population, companies and businesses closing down and moving out (Peck and Emmerich, 1992; 1993), and shunned by both the government and large-scale capital, the decaying downtown area became increasingly abandoned. It was subject to a haemorrhaging of the social relations, and thus the meanings, through which places constitute themselves in space (Thrift and Williamson, 1987). Unoccupied by capital, it was open to colonisation.

However, whilst consolidation around the Bloom Street area had begun, there were still significant obstacles to any significant institutionalisation. Police harassment and a general atmosphere of intolerance meant that clubs were ephemeral. Furthermore

gay culture had yet to become 'fashionable' and trend-setting in popular youth culture. Given problems with security, policing and in some cases the local authority (with respect to licensing applications), gay clubs were often a commercial liability.

The commercial scene only really began to take off from the mid-1980s. At this time, the emergence of a Labour administration more sympathetic to gay rights coincided with Manchester moving centre-stage, as a showcase for pop music and youth culture more generally. Politically, this period started with a 'revolution' in the Town Hall in 1984: in reality a successful left-wing coup against the dominant right wing of the Labour Party, led by Graham Stringer (who remains at the helm in 1995).

In the three years prior to the take-over, rebel left-wing councillors ran a vociferous campaign against the cuts being implemented by the leadership, and twice had the whip removed.[8] Stringer himself places a great deal of emphasis on this period.

> During our 3-4 years in opposition we made alliances at all sorts of levels with all sorts of people who put feminist politics and the politics of the lesbian and gay movement onto the agenda in Manchester. If we had not been fighting the cuts with them, these issues would have dropped from most agendas. (Quoted in Lansley *et al*, 1989, p.14)

Thus the ascendance of the 'new urban left' created a window of opportunity for lesbian and gay activists to push a municipal agenda.

This coincided with changes in the lesbian and gay movement itself. Cooper notes the shift away from the revolutionary strategies of the 1970s such as separatism, and the movement towards identity politics. Demands for affirmation and anti-discrimination initiatives marked a move away from an exclusive emphasis on sexuality and gender as motors of social change.

> The 1980s saw a renewed interest in *affirming* gay identity, developing political alliances, particularly between men and women, and working within the state. (Cooper, 1994, p.23)

She argues that the reasons for this shift lay in the increasing size and strength of gay communities, the growing commercial scene and expanding possibilities for gay lifestyles, as well as the recognition among feminists that differences in experience and relations of power made any simple unity based on gender increasingly problematic. "Identity affirmation rather than sexual de-construction", Cooper notes, "became the priority". As a result of these shifts lesbian and gay activists increasingly became involved in the city Labour Party, in NALGO and in the work of the council either as employees or council members.

An Institutionalised Sexual Politics: Tensions and Contradictions

In Manchester, as elsewhere, the point of entry was the existing formal commitment of the Labour Party to equal opportunities policies. From the beginning the lesbian and gay municipal project was severely compromised by the liberal pluralist assumptions of this policy framework. The implicitly essentialist view of homosexuality conveniently dovetailed with the prevailing paradigm of

multiculturalism. However, as Cooper points out, this made it very difficult to move beyond a simple acknowledgement of equality, and acted to undermine more radical approaches to sexuality which sought to problematise heterosexuality and its relation to the dominant institutions. The resulting 'ideological steer' consistently constrained the agenda and weakened policy commitments. More radical policy innovations were nearly always 'organised out': "filtered and reshaped through a complex process of self-censorship, consultation and monitoring" (Cooper, 1994, p. 81).

The problems associated with the gender blindness of the equal opportunities paradigm were clearly manifest in the different municipal experiences of gay men and lesbian women in Manchester. Gay activists identified quickly with the male oriented structures of the Town Hall and with a number of openly gay councillors. Consequently the Gay Men's Sub-Committee was able to intervene much more quickly and effectively in the policy process. For Lesbian activists the relationship with the Town Hall was always more problematic. Many of the initial meetings were taken up with issues raised by that relationship, such as whether to hold meetings in the Town Hall.

The obstacles barring the way to an institutionalised sexual politics were compounded by the more general bureaucratic inertia which plagued experiments in 'local socialism' from the start. Failure to transform the bureaucratic traditions and structures of local government meant that radical policy innovation resulted in policy indigestion as initiatives were diverted, bogged down and stifled at the implementation stage (Lansley *et al*, 1989).

However despite these problems the municipal lesbian and gay project in Manchester did prepare the ground for the subsequent expansion and consolidation of the Village. However limited, the commitment of the municipal left to establishing the legitimacy of the homosexual presence in the city, was real and has been sustained, in the face of much criticism, for nearly a decade.

1984-1987, Struggling for the Legitimacy of Gay Space: Policy and Planning

Prior to 1984 Graham Stringer was chair of the city Labour party, unchallenged spokesperson for the Left, and an obvious choice for group leader. He came to power on the back of a wave of determined opposition to the (rather modest) package of cuts drawn up by the right-wing Labour leadership in 1983. As part of this package, the gay centre on Bloom Street, one of 23 projects funded under the Urban Aid programme, had its funding slashed by 25%. The new administration was quick to restore the funding to its previous level (*Mancunian Gay*, Number 35, 1984). This action exemplified the rainbow alliance politics of the new regime. The municipal left saw lesbians and gay men as part of their natural constituency, and allies in a shared struggle against the Conservative government. The struggle for lesbian and gay rights became thoroughly implicated in a much wider challenge to the central state. Thus in Manchester the Gay Sweatshop theatre group was approached to do a benefit for the miners (minutes of the Gay Men's Sub-Committee, 21/2/85). The Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament advertised regularly in the pages of *Mancunian Gay* and whereas the Gay Centre was allowed its first stall at the Manchester Show in

September 1984, the military were banned for the first time.

The council provided material as well as symbolic support. Throughout the period the local gay press benefited and was to some extent sustained by advertising revenues from the City Council. Increased funding for the Gay Centre culminated in the eventual move to new premises in Sidney Street. Perhaps more importantly, the new political influence of gay activists allowed the gay community to start defending itself against the low level guerrilla war waged periodically by the Greater Manchester police force. Issues relating to policing and police harassment were and still are, a constant preoccupation for the gay community. Thus in 1984 the gay press was full of stories relating to the use of plain clothes 'pretty cops' (*agent provocateurs*) to trap gay men in the act of cottaging. Whilst the practice had been disowned by the Manchester force in 1982 and was against Home Office guide-lines, the Manchester police were obviously continuing the practice (*Mancunian Gay*, Number 39, 1985). The problem was heightened in Manchester by the presence of James Anderton, who as Chief Constable carried out a religious crusade against those whom he famously claimed to be "swirling around in a cess pit of their own making". Thus in Manchester, the police took a meticulous and highly obstructive interest in licensing applications in general and gay clubs in particular. Clubs were raided frequently and owners and customers subjected to intimidation.

In 1981 the Police Committee had refused to make any specific undertaking not to discriminate against gay men and lesbians. The same year the gay community had been specifically excluded from the newly established Community Liaison Panels. However, whilst they could not get rid of Anderton[9], constant political pressure did lead to limited recognition of the legitimacy of the scene. Thus even by the end of his reign as chief constable, the Gay Men's Sub-Committee was having periodic discussions with the local police on matters relating to the policing of the Village. They requested named officers, sensitive to the issues, to be available to deal with cases reported by gay men and lesbians (Gay Men's Sub-Committee, 1/2/90). Also in 1990, Scene Out worker Chris Payne was selected as a 'lay visitor' for Bootle Street Police Station specifically to deal with lesbians and gays taken into custody in the vicinity of the Village (*Scene Out*, Number 14, 1990). Similarly, although periodic bouts of harassment have continued it is significant that senior policemen were willing to talk to members of OutRage.[10] By 1992 Anderton's replacement, David Wilmot, was willing to issue a statement relating to the need for equality of opportunity for lesbian and gay police officers. Wilmot's glasnost has yet to fully overturn the legacy of the Anderton regime: recidivist elements recently indulged in a gratuitous raid on the Mineshaft club which resulted in 13 arrests.[11] However, since then the chief constable has visited the Village, meeting local gay entrepreneurs, and a more senior and sympathetic superintendent has taken over liaison duties.

For marginalised groups seeking to appropriate space, a real index of success is when local authorities accept the *local* (self-)definitions of place. Thus, acceptance of 'China Town' as a planning entity (a place), should be seen as an important, if limited, affirmation of the legitimacy of the Chinese community's place in Manchester. By this logic the council bureaucracy has moved some way towards formally acknowledging the Village. Whilst NALGO had been supportive for many years, it took several years

for the department to move beyond a vague commitment to equal opportunities. Thus in 1985 the chief planning officer and the Equal Opportunities Committee rejected the suggestion that there was a need for research and general information on the lesbian and gay communities in Manchester - a point of view contested vigorously by the Gay Men's Sub-Committee (Sub-Committee minutes Oct. 1985). However, by 1990 after pressure from the community led to the rejection of an application for a multi-storey car park in Bloom Street, the Highways and Planning Committee agreed that the community should be consulted on all further planning applications. At the same time the Sub-Committee was putting forward proposals for public notice boards in the Bloom Street Area, showing details and locations of facilities in the area. This was less about information than the desire for public recognition of the scene by the council. It was the first time that the area as a whole had been claimed as a gay space. The increasing confidence of the community can be seen also in deliberations about the possible new gay centre which stressed the need for visibility.

> it's no accident that [hitherto] gay premises of all kinds have ended up in dark dungeon like basements hidden away from the world. (Equal Opportunities Committee minutes, 28th August, 1985)

However, whilst political pressure and influence in the Labour Party certainly made a difference, the final conversion in 1991 of council officers to the idea of the Gay Village as a unitary entity which was significant in planning terms owed more to the recognition of its economic importance in terms of marketing the city. Thus whilst the first reference to the idea of a Village in the gay press was in 1984 (*Mancunian Gay*, Number 34), it was not until three years after the imposition of the Central Manchester Development Corporation in 1991, that *City Planning News* (Issue 2/4) referred to the Gay Village as a planning entity.

From Municipal Socialism to 'City Chauvinism'

> They completely changed course ... It was a conscious thing. They decided to do that. (Interview with Dick Pickering, Manchester GMB)

After the third Conservative general election victory in 1987, both the political influence of the new-left in the Labour Party, and the grass roots activism that sustained it, began to wane. Left councils were faced with a choice between grim but futile resistance or a political U-turn. The defeat meant the implementation of cuts in local government expenditure. However, 1987 also marked the qualitative defeat of municipal socialism as the exemplar of a possible alternative to Thatcherism.

The political implications of Labour's defeat were not lost on Graham Stringer. He quickly came to the conclusion that accommodation and co-operation with the Tory government were the only way forward for the council. Of all the radical councils, Manchester has adapted to the new political climate most successfully. Indeed, whilst the level of activism in the party has plummeted and whilst many disillusioned activists have left the party, many of those people involved in the struggle against cuts prior to 1984 (including Stringer) are still prominent in the leadership of the council in 1995.

Abandoning the model of municipal socialism, Stringer also moved away from the politics of the rainbow alliance. Gradually references to 'people based' and 'bottom-up' economic policies were replaced with a managerial emphasis on getting things done. In place of "*defending jobs and services*" the new corporate slogan ran "Manchester City Council: *Making it Happen*". The political imperative was no longer resistance to Thatcherism. Rather, the council began to follow a single minded strategy of 'city chauvinism': getting the best for Manchester. Most of the time 'getting the best' simply meant attracting the most investment, from the EEC, from central government and from private corporations.

Since 1987 the Labour group has abandoned any serious idea that the process of de-industrialisation could be reversed. Co-operating with the Central Manchester Development Corporation (CMDC) and government initiatives such as the City Challenge, the council has become actively implicated in a process of property-led urban regeneration. It has accepted an economic vision for the city based on its status as a regional capital and financial centre. The future is seen to depend on the service sector with a central position accorded to leisure and cultural consumption. The central theme in the new economic strategy has been the 're-imaging' of the city around these themes. Those involved in marketing the city refer to these themes as the 'Euro-script'. The strategy has coalesced around a succession of hallmark events which have provided platforms upon which to rehearse this 'script' ad-nauseam: the Olympic bids, City of Drama, global forum etc. In the marketing pamphlets and publicity videos of the city's new boosters, Manchester is being actively re-invented as a "progressive European city ... cosmopolitan and culturally rich" (Manchester City Council, 1994). The Gay Village, along with other 'cultural quarters' such as Rusholme and China Town, is being harnessed as an exotic proof of the city's cosmopolitan and progressive credentials. This script serves to underline the transition away from a more homogeneous if somewhat fictive past, based on production. The future is post-industrial (CMDC, 1990) and culturally diverse.

In line with this shift away from a purely oppositional politics, the political-institutional structures which had served the alliance politics of *resistance* were gradually wound down. By 1992 the Equal Opportunities Committee, with its separate gay and lesbian sub-committees, had been submerged into the Policy and Resources Sub-Committee. Instead of a formal structure involving co-optees from the community, there is an open invitation for various groups to bring up issues informally with 'lead members' such as Pat Karney and Clare Nangle.

But the dissipation of the municipal lesbian and gay project should not be seen simply in terms of the defeat of the left and the adoption of a radically different political strategy. After 1988 the wider movement was subject to a process of demobilisation. This was in part related to the more general weakening of the extra-parliamentary left, but owed as much to shifting priorities within gay society.

> James 'Cesspit' Anderton may have gone, but so has the late eighties radicalism which mobilised so many thousands against Section 28. (*The Pink Guide*, 1993/94, p.9)

Thus by July 1990 the Organisation for Lesbian and Gay Action - established in the aftermath of clause 28 - had been wound up due to a lack of interest. There was also

widespread disillusion within lesbian and gay communities relating to the failure to turn access to the political-institutional system into a radical sexual politics. The Equal Opportunities framework, which aimed to treat all homosexual relations equally, could not address difficult issues and struggles within the community (Cooper, 1994). Another reason for the widening gap between lesbian and gay activists and officers working in local government and the wider community, was the alternative focus for gay activity offered by the burgeoning commercial scene. Political involvement was no longer perceived as trendy or transgressive. Disillusion was exacerbated by the boredom factor - and Manchester's commercial scene was particularly 'diverting' (Cooper, 1994, p.170). Watney refers to emergent 'post-gay' identities which are in part a reaction to the collectivist and monolithic political identity of 'gay liberation'. The 'queer diaspora' is also seen to be a creative response to the tragedy and loss experienced by the post-AIDS generation (Watney, 1994, pp.63-64). In this context, the institutional links with the Town Hall seemed increasingly irrelevant. Thus when Paul Fairweather left his post in June 1989 there was a period of four months when none of the four sub-committee positions was filled. The Gay Men's Sub-Committee gradually lost the confidence of the community (*Scene Out*, Number 15, 1990). The Village, by contrast flourished, in part reflecting an efflorescent 'diasporic queer culture' more comfortably expressed through the commercial scene. Emergent 'post-gay' identities were more easily articulated with the leisure/consumption oriented strategy of property-led regeneration adopted by Stringer after 1987.

Marketing the *Scene*: The Village as a City Spectacle

Whilst formal institutional links between gay activists and the council were being eroded, the commitment to gay rights was not abandoned. However it was reformulated and is no longer framed in terms of an anti-conservative, anti-capitalist discourse of resistance. The Village and its gay entrepreneurs have become exemplars of the new economic strategy which it is hoped will bring jobs back to the city.

> One of our main concerns [in supporting the night time economy ... and the Village] is to bring jobs and investment back to the city . (Interview with councillor Pat Karney)

Thus when Stringer posed for a photo-call in Manto cafe-bar in the Village to express support for reducing the age of homosexual consent (*Manchester Evening News*, 22nd February, 1994), he also implicitly articulated the links between the Village and Manchester's new leisure/service economy. Along with China Town and the 'Northern Quarter', the Gay Village is being included by the council in the government's *City Pride* initiative. It is being incorporated into a marketing exercise in which Manchester is presented as a progressive, tolerant and above all *interesting* patchwork of diverse districts and quarters (*City Pride Challenge*, Manchester City Council, 1994). These cultural quarters function, almost by definition, as *exotica*.

With this agenda in mind, since the late 1980s Stringer's clique have had an increasing amount of contact with gay entrepreneurs in the Village. On one occasion in 1992, Pat Karney led a group of doubtful councillors around the clubs to press the cause for a more liberal licensing regime and to underline the economic possibilities of the night time economy. Rather than being seen in terms of ethical-political

commitment to a political ally, the Village has increasingly been recognised as an asset, highly relevant to Manchester's post-industrial future in Europe. The commercial scene has become more compatible with the 'Manchester Euro-script': a post-industrial service-based economy with a world class reputation for clubs and pop music; capital of a major European region; a significant cultural and sporting centre; a 24 hour city.[12] A new axis developed between the Village and the Town Hall. But this time it was the entrepreneurs (people such as Carol Ainscow of Manto and Paradise Factory), rather than the activists, who increasingly sought out Stringer and Karney *et al* in their role as sponsors of this Euro-script, but also as advocates of the Village.

> We know the owners and managers ... They come to us for advice. The council is now very supportive ... [if any thing it is becoming a bit of a problem] ... too many people come to see us. (Interview with councillor Pat Karney)

The political space provided during the early years of the Stringer administration allowed gay culture to develop in the city such that it could now lead the way, both in terms of developing a European style street ambience as well as the club culture necessary to make the 24 hour city a reality. Gay activism has increasingly concentrated on issues around HIV/AIDS.[13] The fund-raising events associated with these campaigns are easily compatible with the notions of vibrant street life and public space increasingly in vogue with the visionaries of *Manchester 2000*. Thus the street market referred to above is now a three day fund-raising carnival which involves closing part of the city centre to traffic: 'a major North West event'.

> I think that he [the Lord Mayor] was a bit pissed off because two months previously he had 38 floats in the Lord Mayors parade and we had managed 32 in the first go at a gay parade ... [The carnival has] an Australian Mardi Gras type atmosphere. (Interview with Rob Jackson, Director of the Village Charity, March 1994)

Conclusion

I have identified two overlapping phases in the development of the Village.

1) A political-institutional dynamic, dominant between 1984 and 1988, and working on an axis linking mainly left-wing gay activists based around the gay centre in Bloom Street and the Town Hall. The formal point of contact in the bureaucratic structure was the Equal Opportunities Committee (EOC) and specifically the Gay Men's Sub-Committee.

2) From 1987: A market dynamic, in which the expansion of the commercial scene was actively facilitated by the same group in the Labour leadership - led from the front by Stringer himself. The dynamic axis moved away from the gay activists and the Sub-Committee whilst the EOC was gradually downgraded. Instead personal and informal contacts developed between the Labour group and the gay entrepreneurs.

The point of continuity was Stringer's leadership and unwavering commitment to gay rights. The changing way in which this commitment was manifested reflected the

political shift in the Labour Party and the new strategy of critical co-operation with central government and the CMDC. Stringer's new friends in the media and local business shared a commitment to Manchester and getting what they could out of the new national regime for the city. As David Plowright (then director of Granada TV and member of the self-proclaimed Manchester Mafia) put it, "a few of us got together with the City Council and began to say let's stop dabbing our eyes at the loss of these manufacturing industries and see whether we can't do something to get to terms with what Madam called the enterprise culture". The commitment to gay rights was no longer wrapped up in a discourse of popular resistance to Thatcher. Rather it was weaved into a clever Mancunian version of enterprise culture. The Village has a place in the script of those intent on marketing the city, because it exemplifies the transition from the homogeneous, working class identity of Manchester's industrial past, to the metropolitan diversity of a post-industrial future.

At the same time, within the gay and lesbian communities, there were reactions against the left-wing gay activism associated with Town Hall politics (Cooper, 1994). The commercial scene offered an increasingly vibrant alternative focus for social life which diverted attention and interest away from institutional politics. Increasingly the link between the 'scene' and gay activism was articulated as a celebration of sexual identity and sexual diversity - as with the carnival. The Village Charity has emerged as a focus for gay activism separate from the Gay Centre. Perhaps significantly the charity has new offices at the centre of the Village whereas the new Gay Centre is now somewhat isolated away from the Village in Sidney Street. The Charity's newsletter, *Village Voice*, betrays a wider leadership role formerly the prerogative of political activists. The full time worker Rob Jackson describes himself as politically Conservative but is full of admiration for Stringer's leadership in Manchester.

During the 1980s the gay community was able to consolidate a presence in Manchester, at first by taking advantage of the temporary economic abandonment of the central city. Subsequently the Village has become an important element in the revalorization of the downtown area. By adapting to the changing political and economic climate, gay culture has insinuated itself into the 'Euro-script': Manchester's version of a rejuvenated post-industrial city. The Village has led the way in re-appropriating the street for pedestrians and flaneurs: for a mode of urban experience that is central to European notions of urbanity in which positive ambience in public space is the result of social (face to face) vibrancy and participation. This is best achieved and experienced through the act of strolling (de Certeau, 1984). Gay gentrification in the neighbouring Granby Village development has contributed to this project in the vicinity of Canal Street.

However, this success is ambiguous. The Village is central to the re-invention of a tradition of city living absent in Manchester for nearly 200 years (O'Connor, 1994). But this invention is part of a wider political and economic project. Stringer's Mancunian version of enterprise culture was constructed in the face of the defeat of municipal socialism. The new project has required the Council and the city Labour Party to abandon any hopes for a serious revival in Manchester's fortunes as an *industrial* city. Instead Stringer has chosen to co-operate actively with a strategy of property-led regeneration. The enthusiasm and political acumen which he has brought

to bear in this endeavour has won him a circle of unlikely admirers, including Michael Heseltine and many of Manchester's leading business men. However, whilst the strategy has undeniably transformed Manchester's economic prospects by attracting millions of pounds into the city for a string of flagship projects, it has also contributed to a widening gulf between rich and poor in the city: between those with the money to take advantage of the new leisure facilities and opportunities for cultural consumption, and those who either service this new economy or who are marginalised and excluded from it. The much vaunted dynamism of Manchester's economy depends increasingly on a labour market which has seen a dramatic increase in the numbers of low paid, part time, non-unionised and insecure jobs.

In so far as the Village has been incorporated into this economic project, marginal sexualities have become involved in a "sexual accumulation project" (Evans, 1993). This is true both in that the Village is central to the general re-imaging of the city, and specifically in that it generates considerable revenues for the night-time economy. But commercialisation has brought its own tensions. Sexual transgression has been recuperated, but not on its own terms. As Steve Whittle points out "Most gays are not rich, young, white and beautiful and the scene is starting to exclude them" (*Manchester Evening News Magazine*, 8th June, 1994). The Village has institutionalised a visible gay presence in the city. But involvement in the wider cultural economy has meant that, to an extent gay sexuality is being exploited as an urban 'spectacle'. There has also been some concern among lesbians and gay men about the increasing number of straight people using the Village and undermining its primary significance as a safe place (Whittle, 1994).

Whittle is pessimistic about commercial development and asks rhetorically whether the Village developed to service the needs of gay people, or whether on the contrary, it was a ploy to render gay culture amenable to both exploitation and sanitization (Whittle, 1994). But is it useful to make a reading of the Village as simply good or bad? The articulation of gay culture into the emerging landscape of power has clearly created great opportunities. For a council sponsored gay carnival to have established itself as *the* public event in the city centre over the August bank holiday, is clearly an index of the changes that have taken place over the last 15 years. The presence of ostensibly friendly police men and women sporting red ribbons indicates a significant change in relations between the police and the gay community, even if they are yet to be regarded as Village Bobbies!

But at the same time one cannot ignore the undeniable problems that this mode of legitimation entails. By recognising the way in which the development of the Village is intertwined with the construction of a particular cultural-economic vision for Manchester's future, these tensions can be better understood and placed in a wider context. For example, Whittle highlights patterns of economic and racial exclusion in the Village. But in this respect the Village is simply a microcosm of a mode of economic and social development which affects the whole city. It seems that a gay vernacular will have a permanent place Manchester's new cultural and economic landscape. It is one element among many, in the city's attempt to market itself as a truly heterogeneous and culturally diverse, European metropolis. And thus, at least to some extent, its continued success depends on the sustainability of that economic model.

Acknowledgements

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Footnotes

1 By 'gay community' I refer mainly to gay men, although I am aware that lesbians use and have been involved developing the Village scene.

2 Much of this information is drawn from the full transcript of an interview with Allan Horsfall included in the appendix of Corton (1993). Horsfall was a founder, in 1964, of the North West Homosexual Law Reform Committee. See also Horsfall (1988).

3 The idea was to create a network of small social clubs covering the smaller towns as well as major cities. It was hoped that they could be used as a base to provide counselling services, lists of 'like minded people' and a bar etc.

4 Corton op cit, (Appendix 4:13). In fact James Anderton did try unsuccessfully to use a 19th Century law against licentious dancing to close down gay clubs again at the end of the 1970s.

5 It should be remembered that although the Village is the first phenomenon of its kind in Britain it is tiny compared to similar areas abroad - most notably in America and Australia. Just by way of comparison, by 1980 the San Francisco scene boasted 234 bars and controlled up to a quarter of the vote in local elections (Castells 1983:143-145).

6 In San Francisco gay men talk about 'liberated zones' to make the same distinction (see Castells, 1983).

7 Thus even as late as 1978 Hulme Labour Party banned a gay disco (Mancunian Gay, Issue 1, 1978). By 1991 Hulme had selected a gay candidate for the local council elections. This illustrates the changes which had occurred in the Labour Party as well as in the ward of Hulme itself (See Scene Out, Number 22, 1991).

8 The Manchester Fightback campaign brought together rebel councillors, the trade unions and community activists. It was modelled on a similar campaign in Lambeth (Interview with Dave Carter).

9 The Sub-Committee did call for Anderton's resignation after he recommended the criminalisation of homosexuality in 1987 (Gay Men's Sub-Committee: 14/12/87).

10 Inspector Anderson (Chief- Plain Clothes) is said to have promised to take complaints about the use of 'pretty police' to trap gay men. Over a three month period 54 men were said to have been cautioned by police in the Oxford Road area (Scene Out, Number 24, 1991).

11 105 people attended an angry public meeting the same evening (All Points North, Issue 44, 1994).

12 The gay entrepreneurs in the Village were at the centre of an experiment with liberalised licensing hours in 1993. See Lovatt op cit.

13 The Village Charity was set up in February 1991 to raise money for issues relating to HIV and AIDS. It started as a street sale organised by local businesses.

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THE TROUBLE WITH CAMP

Jon Binnie

Introduction

In order to progress beyond a single mapping of sexual identities, and to produce a richer understanding of the spatiality of sexuality, we need to examine the ways in which the academy regulates work on sexuality. Those outside of lesbian and gay communities often fail to appreciate the risks involved in coming out, and teaching and doing research on something as intimate and personal as sexual identity. As the late Thomas Yingling has argued, we should not downplay the risks associated with doing work on sexuality:

> We should not fool ourselves: to be openly gay or lesbian in the academy, to be working in gay and lesbian literature and theory ... is still to find oneself all too often embattled, belittled, and un(der)employed. This growing encampment on the margin, making its foray into the center, is therefore to be acknowledged and applauded for its labor. Those not within the lesbian and gay community are not aware of how extremely hard-won even the slightest legal or social concession toward lesbian and gay rights is or how perilously fragile the gains of the last few years remain. (Thomas Yingling, quoted in Piontek, 1992, p.151)

This feeling of embattlement is particularly strongly felt within geography. Suspicion of sexual eccentricity, while not exclusive to geography, manifests itself in hostile and phobic practices, such as censorship of work, which make overt mention of sex difficult (Bell, 1994). Given these constraints, it should be unsurprising that geographical work has tended to focus on the safer concepts of communities, identities, neighbourhoods. Recent writing has also focused on the disruptive potential of drag, which comes under the queer theoretical rubric of 'queer performativity'. However, what has been missing is discussion of the disruptive, 'troublesome', pleasures and constraints involved in doing work on eccentric sexualities. Despite the encouragement of supportive straights, the position of sexual eccentrics remains one of marginality. There are still limits to how far we are able to challenge what is acceptable, or unacceptable, in conventional academic discourse.

What are the insitutional parameters which circumscribe those working within the emerging field of lesbian and gay studies? Lesbian and gay studies is a highly

competitive field, which is striving for academic legitimacy - are there not dangers of recuperation, and elitism in this process? While queer politics has sought to reject assimilationist lesbian or gay politics, how can one avoid being assimilated into institutions which have rules for appropriate professional behaviour? Such questions have prompted Sarah Chinn to wonder whether the current blossoming of queer studies represents "Queering the profession, or just professionalizing queers?" (Chinn, 1994).

Intimations of Camp

> How then to define the camp way of looking at things? Basically, it is a way of prising the form of something away from its content, of revelling in the style while dismissing the content as trivial. (Dyer, 1992, p.138)

In her classic essay, 'Notes on camp', which has cast a long shadow over all serious discussion of the subject, Susan Sontag argued that, "the whole point of camp is to dethrone the serious ... [it] involves a new and complex relation to 'The Serious'. One can be serious about the frivolous and frivolous about the serious" (Sontag, 1993, p.116). It is this 'complex relation to the serious' which I am interested in here.

However, defining Camp is unwise, and liable to get one into trouble. Heated serious discussions of what is, or is not, Camp have no doubt ruined many an otherwise enjoyable evening. What one individual may see as Camp, another will dismiss as decidenly un-Camp. While I, therefore, shy away from a clear definition, I would argue that Camp is about maintaining a protective distance from the world. Indeed, Camp has been celebrated by some writers as a specific, gay or queer defence against the values, and norms of heterosexual society (Core, 1984; Dyer, 1992; Meyer, 1994).

Not unrelatedly, Camp has traditionally been associated with what could be broadly described as marginal forms of cultural production. Thus, for example, in a British context, Camp is synonymous with daytime, and late-night television programmes, such as Australian soap operas, 'Prisoner Cell Block H', 'Supermarket Sweep' or 'This Morning with Richard and Judy'. [These days, however, one might query whether these are still marginal forms of cultural production.]

One of the major arguments of geographers working on sexuality, is that sexualities are differently situated in different spaces and places. This important insight complements the more established view within lesbian and gay studies, that sexualities have to be located historically. If this is true, then what is deemed Camp in one situation or location will seem utterly straight in another. Camp depends on the position of the viewer as much as any inherent characteristic of the Camp cultural form or object.

One writer who has boldly articulated a definition of camp is Moe Meyer. In his introductory essay to the collected edition of essays *The Politics and Poetics of Camp*, he defines camp as "the total body of performative practices and strategies used to enact a queer identity, with enactment defined as the production of social visibility" (Meyer, 1994, p.5). Here Camp is inseparable from queer. According to Moe Meyer

then, "all queer identity performative expressions are circulated within the signifying system that is Camp" (p.5). Camp is, therefore, synonymous with queer parody.

In his early essays Richard Dyer pleaded for academics to take popular forms of culture seriously. And yet, one cannot help wonder whether academics studying and defining Camp, from a high brow, high theoretical perspective, run the risk of becoming objects for Camp. To set oneself up as an authority on Camp is dangerous!

Definitions of Camp are pointless given the fact that Camp is more a question of reaction and response (how you look at objects, situations, people) than anything essential within Camp itself. Instead of definitions one can only provide a series of intimations.

Susan Sontag's 'de-homosexualisation' of Camp

> Gay men have staked out a claim on society at large by mastery of style and artifice ... We find it easy to appear to fit in, we are good at picking up the rules, conventions, forms and appearances of different social circles. Any why? Because we've had to be good at it, we've had to be good at disguise, at appearing to be one of the crowd, the same as everyone else. Because we had to hide what we really felt (gayness) for so much of the time, we had to master the facade of whatever social set-up we found ourselves in - we couldn't afford to stand out in any way, for it might give the game away about our gayness. So we have developed an eye and an ear for surfaces, appearances, forms - style. Small wonder then that when we came to develop our own culture, the habit of style should have remained so dominant in it. Looked at in this way, the camp sensibility is very much a product of our oppression. (Dyer, 1992, p.144)

Moe Meyer has argued that Camp subverts the binary opposites and categories of identity politics. "The term indicates an ontological challenge to dominant labelling philosophies, especially the medicalization of the subject implied by the word 'homosexual' as well as a challenge to discrete gender categories embedded in the divided phrase 'gay and lesbian'" (Meyer, 1994, pp.1-2). Many writers have regarded Susan Sontag as the intellectual authority on Camp. Her essay 'Notes on camp' is constantly referred to as a landmark text in discussions of the subject. In his own essay on Camp, Richard Dyer describes Sontag's piece as "marvellous" (Dyer, 1992, p.138). Dyer has stated that Susan Sontag has recognised the connection between Camp and gay male culture. Indeed, Dyer uses her essay to support his argument that Camp is one of the few things which keeps gay people going: "All the images and words of the society expresses and confirm the rightness of heterosexuality. Camp is one thing that expresses and confirms being a gay man" (Dyer, 1992, p.135).

However, while Camp is warm and generous in its critical tone, other recent critiques of Sontag's work by queer writers have been distinctly hostile and chilly. In several recent forcefully argued essays, D.A. Miller has mounted a scathing attack on Susan Sontag's writings on Camp and AIDS (Miller, 1992; Miller, 1993). Miller argues that Sontag, far from championing gay male culture, is, in fact, culpable of

using "one of the most devastating and typical devices in the arsenal of homophobic discourse" (Miller, 1993, p.212). Miller argues that while Sontag does define the link between Camp and gay male sexuality, she then proceeds to downplay the significance of this link. Moreover, he argues that this de-homosexualisation of Camp is necessary in order for her to speak with authority about the subject in a cool, detached tone. Her position is that we can only make sense of Camp by maintaining a distance from it. Miller argues that the desire to maintain distance is symptomatic of her squeamishness. Sontag also freely admits to a certain revulsion towards Camp, which could be interpreted as homophobic.

> I am strongly drawn to Camp, and almost as strongly offended by it. That is why I want to talk about it, and why I can. For no one who wholeheartedly shares in a given sensibility can analyse it; he can only, whatever his intentions exhibit it. To name a sensibility, to draw its contours and recount its history, requires a deep sympathy modified by revulsion. (Sontag, 1983, p.105)

In a similar vein, Moe Meyer has argued that Sontag's essay has sanitized Camp by playing down any troubling queer connotations:

> By removing, or at least minimizing, the connotations of homosexuality, Sontag killed off the binding referent of Camp - the Homosexual - and the discourse began to unravel as Camp became confused and conflated with rhetorical and performative strategies such as irony, satire, burlesque, and travesty; and with cultural movements such as Pop. (Meyer, 1994, p.7)

The Academy as Heterosexual Space

> It is worth recalling two complementary manoeuvres through which our culture's general discourse promotes the negation of what, to respect its specific texture, one might call gay material when the latter threatens to migrate from the marginality where it normally makes its home: a faux-naif literalism to whose satisfaction gay material can never be conclusively "proven" to exist; and a prematurely sophisticated allegorization that absorbs this material under so-called larger concerns. (Miller, 1992, pp.12-13)

Camp is anathema to the excessive literalness of much academic writing, and the crushing formality and pedantry of academic debate and discussion. And yet the exaggerated self-importance of arrogant academics can often lend itself to Camp. Camp can, therefore, serve as an antidote to the academic pose, and the pretentiousness of some academic prose. In this way Camp has a democratic potential. Richard Dyer (Dyer, 1992, pp.145-146) notes that,

> Camp, by drawing attention to the artifices employed by artists, can constantly remind us that what we are seeing is only a view of life. This doesn't stop us enjoying it, but it does stop us believing what we are shown too readily. It stops us thinking that those who create the landscape of culture know more about life than we do ourselves. A camp

> appreciation of art and the media can keep us on our guard against them - and considering their view of gayness, and sexuality in general, that's got to be a good thing.

In a bold, pioneering essay David Bell has argued that lesbians and gay men are 'Insignificant Others' within geography (Bell, 1991). The choice of phrase is deliberatedly intended as an ironic comment on the position of lesbians and gay men within academic geography. In the postmodern celebration of difference, and uncovering of those who have been previously excluded from geographical discourse, lesbians and gay men are the least significant 'Others'. This is an unintended irony. The postmodern emphasis on play and parody, life lived as theatre, has managed to marginalise the very real, material experiences of lesbians and gay men. And yet, while postmodern geographies have marginalised these 'Others', the hostility of some writers towards postmodernism could be interpreted as a fear of the feminine, soft, touchy-feely, strange, queer. Alternatively, there is what I would term the hard man/soft man academic strategy. I am refering here to the ironic form of 'bricolage' and 'textual poaching' mainstream writers use to appropriate gay and other writers who have challenged the deadening weight of positivism within social theory; only to continue to 'do research' in a straight-acting positivist manner.

Surely Camp could demystify at least some of the performance, the display, the straightness of academic prose, and teaching. However, I contend that this subversion is unlikely to come from within the emerging field of lesbian and gay studies. This is because the subject still needs to legitimize itself as a proper, respectable field of study in a homophobic academy. While some have belatedly accepted the need to study the spatiality of sexuality, there is still a general lack of empathy. By empathy I mean that leap of imagination, and chasm in understanding, which no amount of sophisticated theory, or statement of facts, can bridge. This is the crucial distinction between 'knowing' and 'knowing about'. Eve Sedgwick states that knowledge — the fleeting, ephemeral 'knowingness' of queer looks and glances — cannot be quantified, while knowledge of straight society demonstrates its 'knowingness' (i.e. ignorance) towards its queer 'Others'.

> Our culture as a whole might be said to vibrate to the tense cord of "knowingness". Its epistemological economy depends, not on a reserve force of labor, but on a reserve force of information, always maintained in readiness to be presumed upon - through jokey allusion, through the semiotic paraphernalia of "sophistication" - and yet poised also in equal readiness to be disappeared at any moment, leaving a suppositionally virginal surface, unsullied by any admitted knowledge, whose purity may be pornographically understood to be violated and violated and violated yet again each time anew, by always the same information in fact possessed and exploited from the start. The "knowingness" most at the heart of this system is the reserve force of information about gay lives, histories, oppressions, cultures, and sexual acts - a copia of lore that our public culture sucks sumptuously at but steadfastly refuses any responsibility to acknowledge. (Sedgwick, 1994, p.222).

Sedgwick's argument can be applied to cultural studies and the new cultural geography. Both are suffused with 'sophisticated' writing about culture. Writing which, nevertheless, steadfastly refuses to acknowledge lesbian and gay lives and cultures. For example, in the introduction to his essay on Camp, Travers lays his claim to intellectual authority by appealing to French philosophy: "I believe that a great deal of Roland Barthes, for example, is camp writing, as too might be some of late Baudrillard when his cultural analysis becomes 'fiction theory'. You read it for the wit of its flagrant "attitude" towards its logical and muscular skepticism" (Travers, 1993, p.128). Here there is no mention of Barthes's sexuality in relation to his writing (something which D.A.Miller has attempted in *Bringing Out Roland Barthes*). In Travers's essay Camp is evacuated of any troublesome queerness.

I would argue that far from being apolitical and amoral, Camp is essentially moral in the sense that it refuses the definition of the world as straight. Philip Core has similarly argued that Camp involves a set of values challenging one's outsiderhood in straight society: "While camp is now often a joke or pose among gays, it is not without serious value because it originated as a Masonic gesture by which homosexuals could make themselves known to each other during periods when homosexuality was not avoidable" (Core, 1984, p.9). Camp therefore has a morality - of the assertion of gay self-knowledge in the straight world; cities and spaces whose values threaten the annihilation of queerness.

This view of Camp as moral, rather than amoral should be remembered when one examines Andrew Travers's (dehomosexualised, homophobic?) view of the subject. Travers states that: "The self that is camp has no conscience. It is a psychopathic version of Baudelaire's dandy, absolutely and passively bereft of social commitment except where evidence of this adorns its empty pride and boosts its unspeakable morale" (Travers, 1993, p.130). This could be read as intensely homophobic. Compare the Camp lacking a conscience, with the haunting statement in an essay by Eve Sedgwick in Tendencies:

> I think everyone who does gay and lesbian studies is haunted by the suicides of adolescents. To us, the hard statistics come easily: that queer teenagers are two to three times likelier to attempt suicide, and to accomplish it, than others ... The knowledge is indelible, but not astonishing, to anyone with a reason to be attuned to the profligate way this culture has of denying and espoiling queer energies and lives. (Sedgwick, 1994, p.1)

Some Concluding Remarks on Camp: 'So Queer it's Straight-acting'

It is important to celebrate the seductive potential of Camp as a subversive strategy for coping with straight society. However, lesbian and gay cultures are witness to competition, and exclusionary practices which run contrary to the empathetic inclusiveness of Camp. For example, the emphasis on queer genius, on queer saints, heroes, institutions and paraphernalia could be exclusive to those who are not affluent,

or self-confident. Here 'queer with class', can become a queer elite masking class (and other) divisions. Only some are empowered through money and class position to partake in this queer world.

As Sheila Jeffreys has pointed out queer runs the risk of masking other social inequalities around class and race (Jeffreys, 1993). Moe Meyer argues with utter conviction that Camp is synonymous with the "production of queer social visibility". This level of certainty should not be surprising given queer's fondness for loud gestures, and grand statements, and slogans. However, this definition of Camp, along with much else of Moe Meyer's introductory essay, seems decidedly unqueer to me. Meyer seeks a definition of queer using some decidely wooden language, which could lead one to imagine that it is so queer that it is straight-acting. For example, consider this rather convoluted theoretical explanation of Camp as an embodied discourse which rejects the excessive literalness, and straightness of objectivism:

> As a mode for interpretation of queer cultural expressions, the one-way dynamic of objectivism most often results in the erasure of gay and lesbian subjects through an antidialogic turn that fails to acknowledge a possibly different ontology embodied in queer signifying practices. (Meyer, 1994, p.9)

Is it not ironic that Moe Meyer, in asserting the queerness of Camp, should resort to some rather leaden, straight language to construct his argument? Expressions such as 'the queer subject', and 'queer performativity' seem more straight-acting than Camp. Much poststructuralist writing on 'queer performativity' is impenetrable, and inaccesible to those not familiar with its complex terminology. In this sense queer has become elitist. This use of tortuous language is, perhaps, unsurprising given that queer theorists spend much of their time in the spaces of the library, university and classroom. Yet most queers construct their identity in other spaces, such as the dancefloor, the backroom, the cafe.

This essay has reflected the contradictions of writing about Camp. I am sympathetic to Camp as a strategy queers have evolved to assert a moral claim on the straight world. And yet, writing this conclusion, I find myself wondering whether it is appropriate to discuss Camp in the way I have. I find myself increasingly in agreement with those, such as Rosemary Hennessy (1993), who have argued that we need to understand the social relations and differences which inevitably frame cultural constructions of sexuality. The time has come for lesbian and gay studies to address wider social issues such as poverty and homelessness.

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TRANSMANIACS

We present here some texts sent over by some comrades in Italy. Their activism and theoretical perspectives stem from a reassessment of modern urbanism in the context of political analysis rooted in Workers' Autonomy and Bordiguism.
*These texts have been translated from the Italian by Riccardo Paccosi and edited by Alastair Bonnett. Editorial deletions are marked by a [...]. **Transgressions** takes full responsibility for the final translation (aside from quotations by cited authors).*
Transmaniacs can be contacted by writing to:
Transmaniacs, *c/o Gugliemei, CP 744, Bologna Centrale, Italy*

The architectural, economic, semiotic and political transformations of the European city have changed our everyday lives, imposing new behaviours and perceptions, enforcing a new conformism disguised as eccentricity and new strategies for subduing our corporeality. In Italy, above all, this unceasing production of novelties is designed to maintain the same old capitalist power. But couldn't we take advantage of this situation? Couldn't we get a revolutionary theory from the exposure of our bodies to the violent lacerations of the territory? Couldn't we play with, and on, this new psychogeographic level? That is the Transmaniacon project.

It takes its name from the title of a novel by John Shirley. It is a multimedia, subversive project founded in 1992 by a shameless gang of post-anarchists, ex-militants of Autonomia Operaia (Workers' Autonomy), libertarian communists and underground voyagers of doubtful origin. Our project has gradually dilated and linked alternative radio networks, telematic nets (European Counter Network, Cybernet) and amateurish BBs, squats, 'Techno & Western' combos, theatrical companies, concerts, and anti-art exhibitions, street riots, unappreciated film-makers (like Agapito di Pilla) and very ugly magazines and publications.

Transmaniacs have surpassed their situationist ascendencies (the latter are now mere archaeology) to find a new revolutionary theory. They refuse the feigned choice between post-modern deconstructivism and purulent left-wing pseudo-rationalism. They take the writings of Tony Negri, Deleuze and Guattari, Paul Virilio, and Amadeo Bordiga just to let them collide with each other; as theory must be the result of praxis, and originality has never been important.

So let us now bathe in transmaniac language: a sudden attack with sonic parachutes and nose-diving neologisms (very difficult to translate!).

Let's cut the cackle! Let the following texts and reports disguised as essays, accounts of situationautic actions, walks and performances speak for themselves.

Bologna, Italy June 1994

The Coagula

by Roberto Bui
August 1993

1 It is capital itself which upsets and dismembers the state and its administrative connections. For the state is unfit to impose the new tyranny of speed (i.e. the omnipotence and omnipresence of Real Time).

We have gone beyond the welfare state and the nation-state only to find ourselves in a new post-national city-state, one of the links of a supernational confederation whose neurovegative system is the Videodrome (i.e. the unidirectional and pseudo-interactive media).

The new tyranny of speed, or Real Time, changes politics and society [...]: bodies are subject to annihilating accelerations; hi-speed trains imitate the teletransport of science fiction movies, the utopia of transmitting bodies; the megapolis, deranged with immigration and housing problems, dies in a stinking swamp of blood and shit; the experiences of the passer-by are crushed to smithereens under bombardments of contradictory information and cut'n'confused signs; urban territory loses any recognisableness and becomes unintelligible and incomprehensible.

The old city is dead and the territory implodes along with the society contained by the city itself. The new megapolis is a poisoned microcosm of a whole continent, the interzone of interzones, the exhibition site for conflicts over a territory that doesn't exist anymore, for the spectacle of a new tribalism fed with the fear of an 'uprooting' that has already taken place ... . The paladins of identity mistake the epilogues for the prologues. Some call this Europolis.

2 The chiefs of Europolis are owners of bodies, goods, services, spectacles and weapons. The transpolitical rackets of the smaller and peripheral towns are afraid of being struck off the list, of playing a minor part in the new communications circuits, in the production of technological innovations, in the exploitation of the General Intellect. [...]

Every local opinion-leader asks 'not to remain outside of Europe' so that his territory is assured access to information and 'hi-tech' like the big Europolis. This is the crown of the new democratic revolution: "the next Europe will be founded on telecasting and hi-speed vectors, and will abolish the real spaces of the continent in favour of the Real Time of immediate action, which grants a new power to any urban pole, such a power that the mayor becomes a feudal figure, a local bigwig, as in the old hierarchies" (Virilio).

The old form of the nation-state superceeds itself and is relocated on two different levels. It can become a member of a supernational economic and political system (the European Community), or it can disrupt and reorganise itself (the USSR became the

Confederation of Independent States by dint of a spectacular competition between various political rackets, which keep on ruling under the old new mask of 'nation' or 'ethnic group'). Very often these two levels interpenetrate: in the countries of Western Europe the 'secessional' temptations, the projects of an authoritarian 'federalism' and the return of ethnic rivalries, both resist and reproduce the new world wide integration. [...] Such universalist particularisms are paradoxes that promote the spectacular integration and urbanisation of Real Time.

3 In little more than a century, the spectacular and mercantile economy has broken through all the Maginot lines of the old order. It was hard at work to colonise and humble, founding a tele-empire on the abrogation of geopolitical distances - 'folding the distance in its innermost spaces as a spectacular separation' (Debord).

A bird's eye view of our city would show us an open circuit connected to others through visible (the traffic of goods and people) and invisible (cable transmissions or satellite link-ups) currents. The economic levelling of experiences is the 'voltage' of these currents, the constant assurance of the equivalence of urban space. The tourist passes through indeterminate places, always breathing the same air, going 2, 4, 8, 16 times down the same river. Tourism is the eternal return of the identical, an idiot shuffling along in the horrible streets of a Sardinian resort or of a town on the Adriatic riviera. But it is also the Japanese indoor beach with a plastic sea and an artificial atmosphere (but which atmosphere is not now artificial?); the ski-run with synthetic snow (but which snow is not synthetic?). It is building speculation and cement as well as their essential alter-ego, the ideology of renovation that keeps the old town centres pickled ... . I am talking about [...] a homogenised pseudo-life, serial panoramas that lap the corner of your eye while you are running along the highway. Literally - there is nothing new under the sun.

The telematic city-state won't be a 'place' as such, but a random element in indeterminate continental space. And the more this process moves forward, the more the local powers will try to re-absorb and canalise the inevitable conflicts, to synthesise new psychedelics, to invent new ethical interests, to filter subcultures.

The more the urban space is pressed and planned by Real Time, the more it becomes *smooth* (Hardt), the more a situationaut can slide over it, drawing a line between two distant points and assail the administrative connections. [...]

4 City planning is the palimpsest where architects can satisfy their whims and play "a basically negative role in the creation of models that inhabitants cannot understand" (Jean Pierre Estrampes). Urbanisation is the unity of preliminary conditions by which an architect can impose upon our perceptions a "hotchpotch of narcissistic projects ... The Bofill's peplum architecture, or the Nouvel's references to science-fiction, are examples of this. A homogenised culture, composed of childish behaviour, and exclusively based on the 'ideals' of lower middle class snobbery; i.e. media notoriety and the consumption of fashion" (idem).

Two remarks:

A The authoritarianism of post-modern architecture is possible because cities are planned against their inhabitants. The history of urbanisation is a sequence of attempts at moulding society (*Gesellshaft*) to prevent community (*Gemeinwesen*) and to divide and control the working class. The planning of territory entails the invention of forms and places for 'sociability' and 'aggregation', because "systematic integration must take possession of isolated individuals as being isolated together" (Debord).

So the 'social sphere' became the ground of both integration and conflict, of command and resistance. Thus capital made sure that the work-force would be reproduced in the very places and moments where the proletarians used to organise (Trade Union Offices, clubs of the Workers' Parties). In the Taylorist-Fordist city, the 'social sphere' became the realm of a dialectic between workers' struggles and capitalist development.

B The authoritarianism of post-modern architecture is necessary because fordism is over. The cities are 'post-industrialised' and have muddled up the old class composition. [...] The social sphere has been lacerated by destructuralisations. The Videodrome has taken its place. But it is precisely this unprecedented atomisation, and this inclusive deprivation, which gives everyone a reason to refuse the enforced discipline and to want to rise against it.

[...]

5 In an essay on Prague ('The City as an Unfinished project', 1993) Jacques Derrida writes:

> Nowadays the incompleteness, the non-saturation of the urban space should be the supreme rule of any repair project or renewal of the city. This non-saturation will not consist in leaving some spaces to wilderness or "virginity", but in building in accordance with such structures so that new functional and aesthetic possibilities can enrich the city innumerable times even though it is preserved; it is a question of founding while protecting, preserving the existing patrimony without turning the city into a museum or a monumental sepulchre, all things contained in the city which can never be the city. A city should be left open and free to be unaware of its own next mutations. We must enter the respect of the "unawareness" in science and in architectural and urban competencies. Otherwise, we could not do anything but administer plans, generalise, glut and asphyxiate.

It appears, at first, to be a weak proposal. Yet it is profoundly subversive. Totalitarian planning is founded on, and ratified by, the spectacular and mercantile economy's Horror of a Vacuum. This totalitarianism is contructed around antinomies:

to keep intact or to demolish; to protect or to assail; to build a museum or to build a human beehive ...

In order to remove urban form from its residents' desires and reinventions, power can either unchain the speculators or freeze space, making it motionless and petrified (this is the ideology of preservation, turning town centres into show-cases not to prevent their commercialisation, but to sell them to store-keepers, managers and tourism and construction concerns). Either way the result is a compulsory reduction of the city's social complexity, the enforcement of a "monoculture" (Cacciari) that destroys any previous variety of functions and experiences. It is fictitious unity speeding up real separation:

> The spectacle builds its own unity upon laceration, but the contradiction emerging in the spectacle is in turn contradicted by a reversal of its sense, so that the division shown is unitary and the unity shown is divided. (Debord)

6 Derrida writes on behalf of Prague. He implores:

> De-re-construct me! You are on a threshold, increase me, multiply me, do not leave me intact, risk my deconstruction. If you leave me intact and whole, you will lose me. You must preserve me and force me open, protect me and transfigure me, change me to save me, love me and rape me in a certain way, not in others.

That 'way' will never be found by the elective aldermen of the new city-states; that way can only be found by those people who take delight in a practical criticism of everyday life; only the 'incomplete' ones - those who refuse reterritorialisation and are adrift - can realise and carry out the 'incompleteness' and the capacity to redevise spaces. And only the situationauts are really 'incomplete'. And the affirmative outlet of incompleteness is transmaniacality. The situationauts have to organise themselves into Coagula, they must found post-territorial counter-power, connect what the spectacle divides and divide what the spectacle connects. They must oblige the city towards incompleteness and impose a self-managed reinvention of urban territory, with no lamenting the disappearance of the old social sphere, quite the contrary: "Accept its death as a positive thing!" (Paccosi).

The Coagula will be the other cities, the other 'urban repairs', the post-social communities. They will be tele-organised on a transnational and trunk-call scale, and they will be the 'workers' councils' of our age. They will be unrepresentable as 'different', for they will be at the crossing of many differences, differences that will keep themselves nomadic and renegotiable, and will not be fossilised into rigid identities or new tribal customs.

7 The point is that all the antisystem forces must go outside themselves. It is not a question of a new grouping. Just as transmaniacs are not, and cannot be, a 'group',

the Coagulum is neither a 'committee', nor a little parliament, nor an appendix of Administrations (i.e. one of their bridge-heads to the land of 'people's participation' or 'direct democracy'). The Coagulum does not draw miseries together nor 'muster the remaining forces'. In the same way, and in our nomadic community, we will prepare subversive behaviours; we will [...] try to prevent the city turning into a falsely harmonious unity.

What I am thinking of is a diffused and polycentric laboratory in which to forge new weapons. In order to contest multi-media territory planning we must, once again, take over the communication circuits. This does not only mean building various media (radio stations, telematics, videos, publications, graffiti: an explosion of the arts). It also entails recognising our own perceptions, recognising our own bodies; revolting against medicine, psychiatry and politics. Since, the 'environmental' compulsion of class domination is the supreme condensation of all other compulsions, once the 'discriminatory measures' are defined (an extreme example: we will keep the nazi-fascists out), the Coagulum for Urban Incompleteness, will move in every direction. Some will take delight in enquiring into the registers of landed properties or in investigating road building ... others will feel like changing the use-value of a square or the intended purpose of a building by means of performances and sabotages ... some will organise squatting in houses or vacant edifices, other will interfere with urban repairs ... Alice will request that a garbage dump be turned into a public park or garden, Tom will challenge 'culture', Robyn will prefer to sabotage the militarisation and video control of the streets, or perhaps he will investigate accidents at work, or the total institution, and so on.

8 The question of 'discriminatory measures' entails another question: how can we found the Coagula in towns where local powers co-opt the movements and rapidly reabsorb them? To be exact, I am talking about political micro-agreements between the deprived and the depriver, manifest or hidden alliances, cross-class alliances, interpenetration and gradual rapprochement between oppositional movements and local powers.

Above all, we have to understand how this co-option has operated, operates and will operate. We then have to understand that, until now, the question of political 'discriminations' has been tackled in a demented way, often being considered as a moral contradiction ('They're corrupt!', 'They like the mayor's shoes!') or as a betrayal of revolutionary identity ('Substantially, you ain't a comrade anymore!', 'You're a traitor!'). Thanks to these attitudes power has been able to define its own strategy of co-option and reabsorbtion. Every militant racket, every lobby, every group or little party, thought itself to be the unique keeper of the True Revolutionary Identity. So every T.R.I.bune, or charming leader, appointed himself as representative of the 'genuine' claims of the movement. The result was the most short-sighted trench warfare and an incapacity to play the new game and foresee the moves of the spectacle. Thus, when the restructuralisations started crawling, comrades found themselves in emplacements which were already unnecessary, and the Institutions could make a series of 'separate peaces', arrange for the 'filtering' of subcultures and the handing out of jobs.

Once such 'appeasements' had been imposed, a lot of those who kept on fighting in the zone behind the front (the 'Iron Column') had to plunge into a wretched life and disenchantment. Some strove to make both ends meet, others slipped into the typical paranoia of the betrayed, others camouflaged and searched for new weapons. Therefore, let us try to understand that it is not a moral question. It is a strategic question, a problem of ineffectualness and inelasticity (and it is just to settle this question that we have to build the Coagula).

Ideological 'discriminations' are useless. Their only result is the incapacity to communicate with each other. 'Discriminations' must have a stratico-tactical reason. This cannot be acheived if we draw indelible lines, first of all because 'in a world where almost everyone is deprived, almost everyone is potentially revolutionary', and, secondly, because if we oppose boundaries with boundaries, our experiences would freeze in the cold storehouse of the memory, and become both chains and impractical traditions.

Hold on, I'm coming

by Roberto Bui
November 1993

Self-management ... let us undeceive ourselves about this 'self-administered' condition. What we are distributing, at 'reasonable' prices, is misery. It is still the quantity of life instead of its quality; it is still politics, not yet life ...

Self-management may be compared to Buchenwald. The bosses have selected the most able prisoners and created unofficial hierarchies (i.e. the political prisoners against the 'ordinary' ones, with some 'communists' on duty as warders). It enables them to keep effective control with mimimum effort.

And who are today's most able 'self-managers'? In Buchenwald the stalinist leader Ernst Thaelmann used to receive the newcomers and measure their thoraxes. Nowadays it is the various pushers of politics who categorize and control the total disgust of the deprived. [...] That is what the Thaelmanns of today measure: the level of socialisation.

We must get out of this prison camp. We must stop looking upon space as a mere container. We must change our itineraries!

In the squats, we cannot just offer 'infotainment' and dance catechesis. We do not have to limit ourselves to environmental revalorisation and act merely as substitutes for those who kept the spaces empty (i.e. local councils, states, Capital). This is for two reasons:

A These spaces are never really 'empty'. They are sites of ownership and purposeful commercial vacancy. Therefore, we can call them full, full of commercial laws, full of contracts and purposes, full of speculations, full of urbanism ... . In plain words, spaces are full of 'intangible' goods = accumulated material work = signs of capitalist domination. So it is a matter of devalorisation. We must keep these environments away from the law and - as much as possible - from commodification. We must fight to tear aside the veil of capital.

B The crossing of the Thermopylae of an 'alternative' and 'self-managed' social-democarcy will not let us destroy the local powers. It is no use struggling with the old Institutions for the representation of the 'public matter' [Res Publica]. Quite the reverse. It is necessary to define the matter in a new public sphere.

The situationnautic performance (18th May, 1993) at the 'Pellerossa' social centre of Bologna - a squat destroyed and vacated by the cops three months later - had the following aim: to replan the edifice by means of raves and parties; to enable the movement of one's own body in those rooms as on a map drawn from life. At the entrance some people distributed one of several possible 'imaginary guides' (a cut up of islands, continents and disfigured planimetries furrowed by whirls and arrows that showed the way through the different actions). The text read:

We need to jump forward and keep the research open. The squatting and self-management of a building shouldn't attempt to restore the supremacy of use-value over exchange-value, but to ignite capital's territory and open a breach in the city: to open out new ways to free our everyday lives. It won't be a 'revalorisation' but the abandonment of the previous sense of a single environment and, at the same time, an adjustment to a new, significant and inclusive space; space which can give to environments a value incommensurable with 'commoditown'. The squat has to become unusable as capital.

All the ground-floor was subdivided in rooms with plastic and chipboard walls - rooms where strange things were happening (auctions, financial advice and so on). Meanwhile, on stage, the Tribade Tecnical was playing. In the dungeons ('Pellerossa' was a fourteenth century building) we had planned a controlled environmental destruction. Each newcomer received a mallet to rage with against sheet iron scarvings and strange scaffolding. In addition, there were wandering theatrical acts, an exhibition of radiographs ("The body of a revolutionary saxophonist: a contradiction in terms") and alterable sound rooms. And all of it in the name of environmental self determination.

Unfortunately, before all the performances could quite evolve, a crowd of debauchees (including the promoters themselves) turned everything upside down in the dungeons, pulled the pipes out of the walls and inundated the assembled subterraneans. The result? The next day the water supply was gone from the entire block, the squatters quarreled with one another and new metropolitan legends started spreading.

However, this breakdown cannot erase the importance of that evening. The space of self-management should be the first example of unitary urbanism, a microcosm of

the city we would like to plan. A place that is alive and alterable. Not merely a political or cultural 'container' of initiatives but the initiative itself, forever breaking down its own walls and growing beyond itself.

For too long squatters have been mired in their own reassuring customs. It is time to stop the adjustment of intiatives to the environment, and start adjusting environments to the initiative. We must start to deconstruct urbanism.

1.*Tribade Tecnica* = "Technical Lesbian", but it can sound like "Technical Tribe" — is a situationnautic and plagiarist techno-combo which materialises unforeseen in clubs, squats, squares and public gardens. *Tribade Tecnica* is linked with *Cavalla Cavalla* (a techno'n'roll band) and *Pneumatica* (a theatrical company).

Dawn

By Riccardo Paccosi

April 1993

> What are envelopes? They took the place of simulacra. Simulacra were spectacles - virtuality in which we used to instil a sort of meaning - whereas enevelopes are pure and vacant, although they perform the same duties. Simulacra were places where the instances of social conflict were reassumed and directed, and where so-called 'mass psychology' used to be moulded. Envelopes no longer have such a reference: they are events which feed solely upon their own immanence. Apart from this immanence, they are absorbed and forgotten.

This quotation, from an interview by Jean Baudrillard, invokes images of megaconcerts for peace, benefits against racism and famine and TV anti-mafia festivals. Do these events ever leave a meaningful residue? [...] No they do not. Do the people present give a damn about racism? Do they really care about the mafia while they are on their torchlight processions?

The amoeboid agglutinations that once we called 'the masses' grasp at these events with rapacious greed, hungry for meaning. These envelopes, therefore, have to be produced without interruption so that a shadow of common ideology survives, a necessary cohesion for the putrefied corpse of the old social sphere. Di Pietro, Tangentopoli and the 'Clean Hands' Inquiry exist only to perform these virtual duties.

Everything seems to start from the post-ideological age, from the 'crisis of all ideals', the dissolution of the social body. Every social subject endeavours to face what is happening:

A) On a planetary scale, traditionalism - as much Islamic as nationalistic, as much neo-Nazi as communist - is reacting with worldwide integration and hybridisation as well as with its own dissolving legacies. Traditionalism operates at a residual level, an imitation of itself. Yet it also functions at a spectacular level. [...] Above all it serves to canalise and reabsorp the class war.

B) A more diffuse and polymorphous phenomenology corresponds to these epiphenomena, we may call it 'identitary differentialism' (see Balibar). It involves all social subjects, even oppositional and revolutionary subjects. The greed for Truth, the need to stop complex mutations, the will to keep customs and certainties, the urge for 'a few simple and clear ideas' to 'be proof against chaos and conformity' ...

All we want to do is annihilate this need for certainty and simplification. We will not open ourselves to the dialectical chaos on which capital prospers. Rather, we want to start from chaos: to laugh at those who seek the most true Truth [...] We will assert our autonomy in the creation of representations as the moment that allows us to jump from passive nihilism' to 'active nihilism' and beyond.

The situationnautic and transmaniac subversives create representations that work to a completely phenomenal plan. What they say is only a phonation from their mouths, what they do is only a playful physical moment that assails and diverts the use-value of the urban environment. The 'content' and the sym-bology are killed by the gushing out of the dia-bology (just as in the theatre of Carmelo Bene). They are responding to the need to develop representations that exist outside of the spectacle. Representations that can drill into the post-industrial ecosystem and function as unruled agents in the middle of a maze. [...]

We situationauts picture ourselves as grotesque clowns. Clowns - laughing, crying, whatever - who wander in ever-widening circles amid the steaming ruins of the simulacra.

Strategic Proclamation No.3

by Riccardo Paccosi

April 1993

Three Premises

1 Capitalism has turned itself into a sort of biosphere, a whole ecosystem. Urban territory is the hinge of osmotic synergies between the immaterialisation of labour and financial and commercial transactions, between police control and the production of spectacle and information. the city is the code, the sewer of all the codes in which bodies are attacked by the swarming current of spectacles and are scanned by the controllong cameras. The compulsion is in the environments themselves, in the spectacular and military density of city-planning and in the inevitableness of the values it imposes upon our bodies. The rotten flesh of the social body covers this skeleton.

2 The dissolution caused by the code is dialectically counterpointed by 'identitary differentialism'. Infinite proclamations of identity beat a myriad of tracks for the infinite nihilism of the Code. Politics (i.e. the attempts at membership and common identity) is the centre of this spectacular gravity. the actors are subjected to a script that is not only ideology, but also the castling claim of identity. Identity as

simulacrum, 'content', 'discourse', i.e. a pseudo-logos divided from bodily and environmental action, a discourse ready to pour new filthy liquids in the sewer.

3 Dissolution and nihilism are connected and played together by the ambient technologies and by the process of 'cocooning' typical of the Videodrome, a process that aims to introduce bridling and gelatination to thge domestic and personal anbits. To make myself understood, the spectacle is not legitimised by 'television' anymore (the phase of ideological mass-sugestion) but directly by the 'television set', by the hiome ambiemnce. This is more and more manifest even in cyberspace.

Three Promises

4 A new class war project must be hinged upon this: reconquering the foundations of the ecosystematic compulsion (i.e. upon environmental corporality). Nowadays class consciousness is not defined by 'ideas' or 'ideology' (i.e. by contents), but by physical and bodily reappropriation of the city environments (i.e. by forms, phenomenally). The recomposition and self-organisation of the subordinate class — that's environmental autonomy.

5 Through refuting identities and rigid memberships, the class war without politics may start. Transmaniacs don't ask you to comply with a further spectacle, that of the 'Movement' (like the extreme-left wing, Workers' Autonomy etc.) or that of 'Individual revolt' (like some of the old anarchists). For us it is not a question of 'persuading' but a question of 'pervading', perceiving sensitively and physically living a space free from imposed values. This self-insurrection denies the spectacle and prevents the relapse into identitarianism.

6 So we must accept the death of the social sphere as a positive thing and move onto the threshold that enables the dissolution of the new capitalist ecopsystem's dialectical rules.

Three Points

7 Transmaniacality, as uncontrollable and acephalous instigation of riots, has an unmistakeable insurrectional connotation. Therefore, it is not 'alternative', but 'subversive'; It is a polluting attack upon the capitalist ecosystems. It's not a question of enclosing well-off spaces in the hertzian ocean or in cyberspace, but a question of invading and plundering and looting and doing violence to the official values of the city environments.

8 Transmaniacality, as a refutal of the corpse-like cults of identity (the militant commemorations), evacuates preordained symbolic meanings and exploits the expressive materiality of a free floating signifier. It is a pure mediation which doesn't refer to a distant meaning and denies the spectacle.

9 Transmaniacality, as a refusal of the spectacle, doesn't herald the existence of a most true Truth. There is no revelation returning to identitary differentialism, but simply representational autonomy. 'Representation' refers here to [...] a process that can upset all the symbologies and disturb the frigid copulation of sign and content.

This is not simply a detournement, but also a real 'semiological emptying' by means of the assertation of physical revolt in an anesthetising landscape.

Therefore,

the most dense city places — condensations of bodies, spectacles, data, police control and social contradictions — shall be chosen. Agents of this agitation shall be representations without spectacle, i.e. forms of theatrical communication (even if it's clear we are not talking about theatre) in which the situationnauts — individually or gathered in knots — shall provoke various events while everyone'll be trying to extend the playground over the asphalt: vocal and physical events, without pre-ordained symbolic references but a tangible spatial identity. There will be soundtracks and other choreographed elements. The passer-by won't be told of any moral or content: they'll bump into the performing machines at work, and they'll be involved. The choice is unavoidable: join in the disgregated choir, or run away. It's up to transmaniacs, as soon as the passsers-by are involved, to raise the panic rapture to paroxysm (i.e. throwing of things and people, massive pogoing without music), foreseeing the possible complete loss of control. At this point the likely intervention of the cops (or of some talent-scouts) will bring us to a crucial moment: channeling the entropic energies that have crumbled the urban spectacle towards an insurrection of bodies.

The situationauts don't act only in the big cities, but in the country too. Viterbo is a town not far from Rome in North Latium, with 60,000 inhabitants.

AN OPEN LETTER FROM THE SITUATIONNAUTS OF VITERBO TO CARMELO BENE[1], March 1994.

Carmelo Bene,

This letter is written because of an implacable need. I am talking about the things done in Viterbo by a group of musicians and performers. In the ancient town where thou acted in summer '89 (I was there, unloading the amps in the Teatro Romano) something is happening. Such a situation doth not take place anywhere else.

We're penetrating the public institutions of culture, but at the same time our work is refracted onto extralegal milieux which aim at an inclusive social subversion, i.e. at an anthropologic subversion. That's precisely why we contribute to the Bologna "Transmaniacon Project".

Our research entails the negation of the spectacle through the emersion of events that [...] break the dialectical connection between meaning and signifier, leaving contradictions unsolved. [...] [Our work aims to enable] a breach in the dialectics of representations, in the use-value of the everyday spaces and times, i.e. a breach in History: a semiological emptying instead of the putrescent Logos-Code domination.

The performing machines (which is what we want to be) sing the song of their absence, of [...] the transvaluation of the Code. Our severity of forms and behaviours emerges from our conscious approprative play between sincerity and untruthfulness, between genius and charlatanism.

The heinious resemblance between our poetics and projects and your theatrical ontology of absence will not change even should you be indifferent to us. And now the chronological description.

At the end of 1991 some militant anarchists (of which I, the undersigned, was one) were bored to death with politics and with its boorish spectacle, i.e. the continuous statement of Identity and too much fucking nostalgia. So we theorised an "entropic communication", and strange writings appeared on the walls, like "BAVA BECCARIS ASSASSIN"[2] "DOWN WITH POPE PIUS IX!", "BOYCOTT THE TAX ON FLOUR"[3], "THESE ALMONDS ARE SOMEWHAT STALE". We made aimless petitions, conferences on the pros and cons of concentrated yoghurt and antispectacular theatrical acts in the streets, for example:

A) The TOTEMISATION OF THE TOILET: a toilet is placed at the centre of a circle of bodies — someone sits down on it, wearing sunglasses, a tail-coat and a cravat — the bodies start uttering a progressive, all-surrounding phonation — the passers-

by join the circle — the phonation becomes an emerging scream — at the top of paroxysm, the circle loosens — all the performers get away, none of the passers-by has the heart to approach the toilet — finally, after thirty minutes someone goes near — the toilet becomes a totem erected on the disgregation of the symbologies — the diabology has got the upper hand, and the square is not the same place anymore.

B) The TRIPE ACT: someone falls into a fit of convulsions — a splatter effect of self-disembowelment — the guts (tripe and tomato sauce) are thrown down on the ground — the performer crouches down and eats the tripe, following the example of a black bitch that was wondering about — the sole onlookers art four agents of the DIGOS [the General Department of Investigations and Special Operations, that is the political police). The devouring was not foreseen, it arose from the style necessity of the performing machine.

After we walked under the caudine forks of that dadaistic period, a more constructive and assertive phase began in 1993. Our sphere of activity started extending.

Manifold performances (poetry readings, Renaissance music, theatrock) proliferated to such an extent that the Local Tourist Organization (unlike the Municipality) began to sponsor and finance (just a little) some theatre festivals. There were also theatrical initiatives in the streets, a tumultuos *Feast of Springtime* which changed into an insurrection against the cops and the wealthy local merchants. The result was the Digos unconditional prohibition of 'theatrical communication'. However, some similar events took place every night near the thirteenth-century Pallazzo de' Papi. Other things happened in a peasant house where hundreds of bodies wandered amidst psychedelic concerts, rave parties, theatrical acts on death, rooms where some people listened to the lascivious notes of a lute and open spaces where others played neapolitan stornelli: all this happened in a few square meters.

A few days later the local newspaper wrote of orgies and satanistic rites occuring in the house... This turned out to be a peiece slander by the father of a girl who had left home to follow one of us. There was a rumour that the Minister of Justice and the Chief Policeman Vincenzo Parisi were involved in this trick.

On the crest of that wave, in July, we squatted in a deserted gasometer and turned it into a self-managed social centre. We put on various happenings there, and in November we showed your films. After the showing of "Omelette for Hamlet", we led a discussion on "The performing machine and revolutionary becoming".

Naturally, the agents of all those events were nearly always the same, and also the scripts, which were dilated or synthetized according to the context. In fact, in the course of 1992, we had joined the Bologna "Transmaniacon Project", and devastating performances took place in the social centres of Modena, Bologna, Ostia... The results:

1. The spectators lobotomize themselves and stand still for three hours without escaping nor applauding (Bologna);
2. Everybody runs away after five minutes, so just one onlooker - unknown and never seen before - stays for two hours and applauds at the end (Modena);
3. Listening to a Bach's toccata, the onlookers take some clubs and destroy everything: the wires are snatched out of the walls, the pipes are cleaved, the floor is flooded so

the wet wires crackle (Bologna);

4. While it's stricking midnight of New Year's Eve, the audience stops the "Tripe act" and try to lynch us, but our sharp reasoning persuades them, and we are entreated to go on (Ostia).

But let's get back to Viterbo: what was happened, in fact, in the springtime of 1993? Well, we had complete control of the collective imagination of the town. A flaring halo encircled the bodies and the spaces the populace used to stir in, [...] You might say: "Not difficult, in a little town of only 60,000 inhabitants!". But those people who've seen Viterbo know the petrification — a petrification that closes in upon the walls, upon the peperino edifices, upon the 'etruscan' features of the inhabitants. We had fought and defeated that petrification, but then we channelled our energies into the social centre, so many things and projects got shut in a restricted place, in a rut. As so frequently happens, even our coarse grip on power led to many cultural contradictions coming to the surface. ("Tzk! Tzk! Tz He poisons him!"[4]).

with my regards

RICCARDO PACCOSI.

The Translator's Notes:

1) Carmelo Bene was born in 1937. He is the most important exponent of Italian avant garde theatre. Since the beginning in 1958, his style of acting has been extreme and deformed, and his liking for provocative exhibitionism and his 'unseemly' behaviour (on top OF HIS disturbing deconstruction of many Classics and his anti-realistic sound-scores) have drawn the attention of the censors. In 1963 the police stopped and forbade the performance *Cristo '63*. In 1970s Bene altered and transfigured many works of Shakespeare (He staged *Romeo and Juliet* eliminating the character of Romeo!), Marlowe, Wilde (In the *Salomi*, Jesus try to crucify himself, but he cannot nail both hands...), Laforgue, Cervantes and other playwrights, dismembering the scripts and placing the actor (turned into a 'performing machine') at the cathalysing centre of a spectacle, being destroyed from the inside. In fact his performances have challenged the mimetic aesthetics of the bourgeois theatrical tradition, which considers the actor as a passive intermediary of the script. (A few years ago, Bene broke into the Ministry of Tourism and Spectacle waving a gun around!) He's had violent rows about his radical projects with various public managers of the spectacle.

2. Fiorenzo Bava Beccaris (1831-1924) was the general in command of the Army-corps of Milan. In 1898 he ordered troops to fire on a socialist demonstration: dozens of people died. Three years later, in Tuscany, the anarchist Gaetano Bresci murdered the king Umberto I with a knife, to avenge these victims.

3. The Tax on Flour was levied, after much hard dispute in parliament, by the Italian Government in 1869. It was collected at the time of grinding, and caused general famine and discontent. This in turn led to riots and insurrection, which the Royal Army repressed. The tax was annuled in 1880.

4. This is a quotation from Carmelo Bene's "Omelette for Hamlet":[...] While Hamlet is rehearsing the play, his uncle, the King of Denmark comes in and starts prompting the actors. At the moment of the murder, which should implicate him with the death of his brother, the previous King, he reproaches an actor, who is going to stab the victim, and says: "Tzk! Tzk! He *poisons* him!".

Tom Vague Interview

Tom Vague is a central figure in British 'Pop situationism'. His magazine, *Vague*, which began as a punk fanzine in 1977, developed in the late 1980s and early 1990s into an eclectic and lively celebration of anarcho-post modernism.

A few years ago the *New Musical Express* (19th March, 1988) described *Vague* as "the ultimate A-Z of bolshiness . . . the riot bible to get hold of". This 'accolade' reflects the fact that the magazine has provided one of the few popular outlets for situationist influenced commentary on music, culture and urban living. Thus, for example, *Vague* has published the situationist Ralph Rumney's 1957 photo-text of his 'drift' round Venice, a number of introductions to situationist and cyber-punk theory and Tom Vague's own accounts of the ambiences and situations (personal and political) he has encountered over the years in different parts of London (for example, his autobiographical essay on West London, called 'English Psychogeography' in *Vague* 24).

And it is the unembarrassed mixture of the personal and the political, sometimes anti-theoretical, sometimes extravagantly extreme, that has made *Vague* such an absorbing and unique magazine. *Vague* has been provocatively, wilfully, inconsistent; sloshing together beery laddishness with libertarian angst, useful and interesting articles with self-indulgent nonsense, ultra-radicalism with a peevish contempt for organised anti-capitalist resistance. And, despite its nostalgia for punk, *Vague*'s 'anti-political political' stance has proved curiously contemporary, providing one of the best and most honest reflections of the post-modern British urban zeitgeist.

The collected works of *Vague* were published recently by AK Press (*The Great British Mistake: Vague 1977-1992*). AK Press have also released Tom Vague's study of the Red Army Fraction, *Televisionaries: The Red Army Fraction 1963-1993*. Both books are available direct from the publishers: AK Press, 22 Lutton Place, Edinburgh, EH8 9P

Tom Vague: I don't think what I do is strictly speaking Situationist Psychogeography. Guy Debord or somebody would probably say that it's Pop Situationism at best or just post-mod pop-cult tourism/terrorism, which I'd prefer. But the way I interpret Psychogeography or Unitary Urbanism or whatever you want to call it is just different, subjective ways of interpreting and seeing the city/urban environment (it doesn't have to be an urban environment really). As opposed to going from A — where you live — to B — to work — to C — to the shops — to D — to a gig or nightclub — Same thing day after day — Tube — Work — TV — Sleep — Tube — Work — How much more can you take — One in ten go mad — One in five cracks up.

I don't really go along with the occult/mystic side of it but that's fair enough, I suppose, it's just not my cup of tea. I'm more into living in a real community — for want of a better word — what about 'scene' ? No, 'community' — where you run into people at random and go to a caff or the pub, or back to someone's place for a smoke, and don't bother with whatever job you were going to do. It's got to be vague. Just doing different things in different parts of the city. Like discussing existentialism at a football ground or getting pissed and having a laugh in the City. I'm not really interested in any organised things like demos or *Stop the City* or anything. I don't even want to stop the city as such, anymore than I want to stop TV. Although most of the time it's crap, it's just a thing. I find all demos, pretty much without exception, a bit old hat and revivalist.

Transgressions: *Vague* has always been open to the localness, and the personal context, of play and resistance. Why are these things so important?

Tom Vague: So important to me? I need a bohemian atmosphere, I'm determined to fit in. It's just the kind of guy I am. I'm always looking for the funny line, though sometimes it might be a while coming. It's punk rock, post-modern existentialism. It's what I do. I just cover the scene around me, or my scene. I'm just an ordinary bitter man. Most of the time it's a laugh, and a struggle at the same time. Vague is reality, it's not fucking style culture or high art or pop.

Transgressions: How do you think groups like the RAF and the Angry Brigade subverted or supported the Situationist project?

Tom Vague: I think they were one interpretation of it (or a few interpretations). You can look at the RAF and the Angries in one way and say that those guys really took it to the limit, to it's natural conclusion. They didn't mess about, they were the genuine article. Then you can look at them in another way and say they were a bunch of fanatical nutters. Nowadays I mostly think the latter, though I have moments when I think the former. It's all history now anyway.

But I don't really consider myself pro-situationist or even pop-situationist anymore. I've recently discovered that I'm not a Utopian. I always thought I was but I think I'm more of a distopian really. The way I see it the Situationists and the Angry Brigade, hippies basically, were utopian, while all your roots pop culture from blues to rock'n'roll to punk to rap, has been distopian.

Transgressions: How has you attitude to Punk and youth sub-culture generally changed since you first started producing *Vague*?

Tom Vague: In some ways it hasn't changed, in other ways it changes all the time. My motivation for doing *Vague* is still the same as it was in the 70s, it's something to do and I think everything else is crap. *Vague* came out of Punk, which was more of a media phenomenon than just a pop music thing. I was never that interested in just the music, or music for music's sake. I think the most interesting thing about pop music is that it isn't just about music and when it is, it's at its most uninteresting.

I suppose it's pretty sad that I spend most of my time thinking about or being concerned with pop/youth sub-culture, but doesn't everyone? What else is there to be concerned with? Everything else is old hat. After punk modernism ended and nothing new has happened since. Punk was the Year Zero of pop culture, for me at any rate. Maybe punk wasn't new either but it blew the gaff on modernism. It was the day the world turned dayglo. Everything's become pop culture since.

Narrow Casting in Fibre Space

Counter Intelligence

exhibition of self-published and entirely autonomous print creations including 'zines, comics, flyers, pamphlets and books

121 Centre,
121 Railton Road,
Vale of Effra,
London SE24
October 1st-31st 1994

by Mark Pawson and Jason Skeet

Commentators and critics often resort to simplistic binary codes to explain their fatuous theories. Like that old cultural conundrum of the mainstream versus the underground or alternative media, mumbles about which can still be heard in MA dissertations across the land, Sunday paper colour magazines, the glossy pages of *ID*, as well as other highly esteemed sources of analysis of what's happening. In this paradigm, the various variations on a theme suggest that the alternative media always has invisible links to the mainstream medias, a place for those wacky types to work through their apprenticeships before they make their valuable contributions to society, and/or that the underground media is where important developments are made which eventually trickle up into the other world. It is assumed that there is a mutual relationship between these worlds, that they both need each other.

This thesis has been applied on countless occasions, from Punk Rock to trendy writers, from the multitudes of avant-garde causes to non-stop night clubbers. Ultimately, the alternative media is just made into one more choice in the market place of ideas, a bit like the home-made bread you can buy in a supermarket, smug with the notion that only a hundred other people are able to taste it. The underground is a fiction, a myth, and like the rest of the prefabricated visions of the dominant media, one which always conveniently ignores social antagonisms and class divisions.

Well, as it happens, these soothsayers and two-bit theorists are missing out on something — activities and energies that are situated beneath their funky 'underground' and beneath anything that the mainstream can deal with. Things that don't need the irrelevant ramblings of a cultural studies lecturer to understand, made by people who don't dream of one day entering that mainstream world and hitting the big time. Stuff, in other words, that will always

be too weird and wonderful, always a million miles away from the work ethic, the financial reward and the social status that dominates in both the mainstream and the alternative medias; projects and pursuits that, to coin a phrase, exist in little worlds of their own.

To look at it in another way, society is far too complex for these binary ways of thinking to explain things and why people do them. Self publishers show how the notion of mainstream versus underground doesn't always work. Quantities and qualities of autonomous print creations have grown vigorously alongside the development of affordable desk-top publishing facilities and cheap photocopy machines. They may also represent an antidote to the social fragmentation and alienation of capitalism. Networks of people are making their 'zines, flyers, comics, pamphlets and books not in order to work in the ideological market place but to play somewhere else, not outside the mainstream, but in another dimension altogether, on a terrain they can build themselves. Crazy fucked up noises that just do it. An invisible college of a million minds.

The *Counter Intelligence* exhibition has been an attempt to explore some of these worlds, and to find out where they are coming from, where they cross and interlink, to get dizzy with the diversity of stuff being produced. Hopefully, the show demonstrates why it is necessary to move beyond the binary opposition of alternative/mainstream to realise the possibility of culture becoming everyone's property to copy, paste and layout as we wish.

The exhibition roughly divided material into broad categories, including free information, mail art, comics, art objects, music, political, obsessions, queer, technology, and the uncategorisable. These divisions were not intended to be definitive, and as the written pieces in the catalogue accompanying each section suggest, there are loads of ways that the publications interlink and cross-fertilise. Most histories of the self publishing impulse usually trace the origins of today's 'zine phenomenon to sci-fi fanzines of the thirties, and whilst this is an important precedent in terms of attitude, this exhibition reveals how lines of influence can be traced all over the place — from Dada to Punk, from lazy Sunday afternoons to cutting edge cultural theory.

The organisers have intended that the punters absorb an essential concept — that of *narrowcasting in fibrespace*. The notion of 'narrowcasting' is intended to counter the term broadcasting, the idea that the aim of all media production is to reach as large an audience as possible. The print creations in the *Counter Intelligence* show pose the possibilities of being site specific, stuff made for particular audiences who must participate in their play of meaning. The term 'fibrespace' denotes the multiple possibilities for communication that exist, from the fibres that constitute paper to the fibrespace of fibre-optic cables that enable the digital transmission of electronic messages. Whilst computer nerds are still predicting 'Total Computer Revolution', what we are in fact seeing is, as in the past, the overlapping and intermingling of technologies, so that new possibilities are created by people finding their own uses for things. This exhibition throws open lines of thought for celebrating why, alongside explorations of the InterNet and e-mail correspondence, we will continue to make our print creations and autonomous self-published 'zines, flyers, comics, pamphlets and books.

The *Counter Intelligence Calatlogue* is available for £2 (p&p inclusive) from BM Jed, London WC1X 3XX, UK.

Reviews

We open our review section with several pieces about Guy Debord, who committed suicide recently. As a major figure in the European avant-garde since the fifties, his death has arroused almost as much controversy as his life.

Guy Debord at the Galerie Lafayette[1]

a review of *"Cette mauvais réputation . . ."*
by Guy Debord, Gallimard Paris 1993.
from *Ab Irato*

In this book Guy Debord sets out to show the manner in which "the critique which these times could be destined to contradict" manages to deform his works and publish false information about his life. In this spirit, he limits himself to the "most stunning series of examples appearing in the media gossip of the country [France], between the years of 1988 and 1992" (p.12).

The examples of deformation registered by Debord can be grouped in two distinct categories: in the first, the articles written about him in different papers (*Globe, Le Monde, L'Evenement du Jeudi, Art Press, Actuel, Libération, Le Quotidien de Paris, La Croix, L'Humanité, Le Point, L'Idiot Internationale, etc.*) These articles have in common their deliberate lying; it is as if the authors had strained their wits to misunderstand what they read. In the second category, to which fewer pages are devoted, there appear some texts, a pamphlet and a book which share the characteristic of not coming from the media resources mentioned above, but *from the radical milieus* (the pamphlet *Echecs Situationniste*, the 'zines *Les mauvais jours finiront, L'Encyclopédie de nuisances, Maintenant Le Communisme*, the book *L'Anti-terrorisme en France* by Serge Quadruppani). Clearly Debord is more comfortable refuting the idiocies of *Globe, Actuel* or *L'Idiot internationale* than responding to the criticisms made of him from within the radical milieu. Although he could readily ridicule the Great Wiseacres of our age with his reserves of humour and distance, Debord appears here stressed, dry, without voice and bereft of the capacity for a witty rejoinder. Even more seriously, Debord wilfully takes these criticisms made by the radical milieus in the same way as the deformations produced by the media (a collection of "most stunning series of examples appearing in the *media gossip* of the country" — my emphasis) with evident prejudicial intent.

Debord accepts that the situationist adventure might have been deformed *en bloc* by the media (which in a certain way became part of the game), but he does not accept that it might be *critiqued* nor that his accomplishments need to be set in context. *Until now Debord has been too patient and too good; it seems he no longer wants to be questioned.*

Of the 'zines which emerged from the neo-situ milieu, two set out to criticise the *Situationist International* and inevitably Guy Debord. The first, *Les mauvais jours finiront*, advances arguments which merit attention. However, Debord does nothing to respond to these. He contents himself with citing (for the public archives?), without comment those passages which concern him. To present them as "media gossip" is his only reply. *He no longer wants to be criticised*, or only by the media clowns who, as his own theory shows, are neutralised by their function. The second 'zine, *L'Encyclopédie de nuisances* puts forward an interior critique. In Issue 15 (1992), they drew up a balance sheet of the situationist years which had also been the years of the producers of the 'zine (the old situationist Sébastiani and Jaime Semprun, author of the 1974 book published by Champ Libre, *La guerre sociale en Portugal*). Even though the "encylopaedists" are *soft* on Debord, and weigh their words carefully when criticising him ("Debord's personal genius", "brilliantly led individual adventure"), Debord lashes into them without consideration. *He no longer wants to be questioned.* He contents himself with a laboured and quite insufficient *"I was how I was; and nothing very different could come of it"* (p.82). Being as he was, he could only do what he had to do, and in consequence he could not be mistaken or fall into error (cf. p.13). Or so he says. In order to close debate with this indelicate *Encyclopaedia,* which wants to understand why, given its origins, situationist theory reached its destination, he mysteriously and tartly notes that there must be a "disinformer" within the 'zine (p.84). This clearly dispenses with according any credit to what was said about him. In any case, like the preceding 'zine, *L'Encyclopédie de nuisances* is only "media gossip".

It is astonishing that Debord feels the need to hang around denouncing the disinformation of the media. After all this is a common fate, a feature of the epoch; and given the radical position he has displayed as regards this society, a predictable consequence. So what's he waiting for? To be treated on the radio as a philosopher, a sports star, an economist? What's interesting about Debord isn't what the media say about his works and his life through *deforming* them, but that they *speak* about him at all. To shut a dissident up, it isn't necessary to deform their words, it is sufficient to ensure that their voice *doesn't carry*. The radical milieus are well used to living with this *politics of silence*. Debord isn't worried about why he has become a media topic since around 1985-8 ... [to please whom?] ... It is as if he is no longer interested in the radical milieus ("I don't know what they pretend to imply by suggesting that I have acquired a considerable influence in 'certain milieus'. Which milieus are they speaking of? This isn't some kind of recommendation, I presume." p.28); so it is evident that today the question must come from *elsewhere*.

In 1988, in an article appearing in *Le Monde*, Phillippe Sollers, a big cheese at Gallimard, gave open praise and an explicit panegyric to Debord: "My opinion of schemers in the phantom market: a sudden and unforeseeable rise which is not

necessarily posthumous". It is, perhaps, time to identify the social groups who are nowadays more and more interested in Debord and his works. The theory of the spectacle, which he put forward, and which "was meant to provide an unpleasant portrait of present society", today offers an effective reflection of the people who shop for the works of Guy Debord in the Galerie Lafayette. *Their point of view of society* expresses their social position *within* society. The theory of the society without crisis is of great interest to these social groups, for whom today's sudden and so-called unforeseen irruption of crisis (without precedence since 1945) is such a menace.

Debord has convinced the situationists that no-one apart from him, the man who holds the monopoly of its authorised historic information, should ever speak of the SI after having left it. Although Breton knew what it was to be insulted by repentant surrealists during his life (*Un cadavre*, 1930), Debord made sure his experience was different. "Two or three impostors had occasionally pretended to have formerly known me, but naturally they had nothing to say. And I naturally had nothing to say to them; I might harm someone who authentically dared to try such a game. None of the names which ever appeared in the SI have ever come to anything since." The question is, what, for Debord, and today, constitutes disinformation and evidence. Nearly all the surrealists have spoken of surrealism and of André Breton, some to defame the movement after they had broken with Breton, but for the main simply to give their testimony. No situationist has risked speaking of the SI.

Should one of them risk it, it might, anyway, simply be defined as "media gossip".

Barthélémy Schwartz

[1] Galeries Lafayette is a posh shopping mall.

This review appeared in *Ab Irato,* French Language magazine available from BP 30-75860 Paris, Cedex 18, France. English Translation by Luther Blissett.

Society of the Spectacle

A film by Guy Debord (1973),
screened on French TV (Canal +) 9th January 1995

This review must in some ways function in place of an obituary to Guy Debord. But there is something distasteful about the role of an obituary. Too often they amount to slapping some notable on the back and saying 'Well done, old bean!' as they slouch off to the graveyard. Obviously Debord's death has a personal meaning to his friends. But his decision to commit suicide after collaborating with a TV programme about his life and the screening of his film *Society of the Spectacle*, after having withdrawn it form circulation for ten years, also places his death in the public arena.

Before his suicide (30th November, 1994), Debord collaborated with Brigitte Cornand and Canal + in preparing a documentary to precede the screening, on January 9th 1995, of *Society of the Spectacle* (1973) and the sequel *Refutations of all judgements whether for or against, which have been brought to date on the film*

The Perfection of Suicide is in its Ambiguity.

The suicide of Guy Debord on 30th November, 1994 has led to the former Situationist being caught up in a number of discourses he may at one time have viewed as distasteful. In the *Guardian Weekend 1994: Review of the Year* (*Guardian* 31/12/94), Debord was name checked in the *Those We Have Lost* column alongside two other suicides, rock singer Kurt Cobain and Great Train Robber Buster Edwards (other deaths noted included those of Derek Jarman, Richard Nixon, John Smith, Jackie Onassis, Dennis Potter, Kim Il Sung, Peter Cushing, Karl Popper and Keith Joseph). Clearly, Debord's timing was good because if he'd killed himself at the beginning of the year, the mainstream media may well have forgotten his suicide by its end.

Messages placed on the internet about the suicide included one from Edward A. Shanken who wrote: 'Guy Debord did not kill himself. He was murdered by the thoughtlessness and selfishness of so-called scholars (primarily trendy lit-criters) who colonized his brilliant ideas and transformed his radical politics into an academic status symbol not worth the pulp it's printed on...' This generated a few angry responses, the import of which was that Debord was not another Jim Morrison, Ian Curtis or Kurt Cobain who 'died for our sins.' Shanken didn't address the fact that Debord was utterly obsessed with the notion of 'recuperation,' and that as a consequence, he was to some degree responsible for all the uses made of his work. The Situationist International deposited a good deal of material with archives and museums precisely because it did not want to be forgotten by academia.

John Young used the Net as a soapbox from which to claim that Debord had worked for Mossad: 'this dazzling and humbling association with real world power beyond the soft-minded literary and philosophical worlds totally mesmerized Debord... The elixitrate mix of sacred and profane literally made Guy drunk with intellectual stimulation and shared worldly risk... the intrigue and daring bond of high mind and base reality was an alchemic transformation of mental to physical like no head-wrought book could come near.' Unfortunately, the intertextual origins of this thesis were plainly evident in Young's claim that he'd learnt of Debord's spook activities from Philip Roth. Young even went as far as asserting that Debord had provided the model for the central character in Philip Roth's novel *Operation Shylock: A Confession.*

Meanwhile, Malcolm Imrie's obituary in the *Guardian* of 5th December 1994 absurdly claimed that 'with consummate irony, he (Debord) allowed his work to be republished by Gallimard, entering the pantheon of French literature, just as the pantheon was collapsing.' In the world the Situationists wished to create, such a panegyric would be viewed as supremely ironic. Suicide was an occupational hazard for the Dadaists and Surrealists, perhaps Debord hoped to realise and suppress this tradition by using death as a method of reintegrating himself into the avant-garde. In the meantime, death remains the ultimate commodity, a handy gimmick to help sell works of 'revolutionary theory' in an already over saturated market.

Stewart Home

Society of the Spectacle (1975). This happened alongside publishing deals with mainstream publishers. It seems that Debord wanted to ensure his 'contribution to humanity' would be preserved for posterity outside the coterie of ageing pro-situs. He can thus now be assumed to the firmament of French revolutionaries who constitute an intellectual establishment from the grave. (Earlier in the year the spectacle arranged to commemorate the D-Day landings included a French Army choir singing a song by the surrealist Paul Eluard.)

Having spent some time trying to track down copies of situationist films (and only succeeding with Vienet's *Can Dialectics Break Bricks?*) I looked forward to the opportunity to see two films which I had only been able to read in transcript (*Society of the Spectacle and Other Films* , Rebel Press, London 1992). In this I was not alone. Others even travelled across the Atlantic so as to see the original transmission in France. Overpriced bootleg video copies are now available in selected London shops, although the discerning consumer will wait until a dubbed/subtitled edition will be available later this year.

It was with a little apprehension that I sat down in front of the TV to watch a film which had attracted a mythical status during Debord's 'Film Strike'. However, before 'the Master's' work was shown, we had to undergo the grim purgatory of Cornand's rubbish. The schmaltzy nostalgia for the Paris of the fifties and sixties, accompanied by stereotypical accordion playing, was rounded off with liberal sentiments about Chernobyl and the environment. Could being associated with such crap be the cause of Debord's suicide? It was so pathetic we used the fast forward control.

When *Society of the Spectacle* finally graced the screen, the difference in quality was immediate. The preceding dross quickly passed from our minds as we grappled with what Debord was setting out to achieve. His written material is largely iconoclastic, in that it places more importance upon the text and is suspicious of the image, moving or otherwise. The spectacle is defined as "a product of the techniques of mass dissemination of images [...] It is a world vision which has become objectified" (Debord, 1977, Thesis 5). Why had Debord returned to film in 1973, twelve years after his earlier experiments with the Lettrists and Situationists?

It is useful for a moment to consider his first film *Hurlements en faveur de Sade* (1952). This is notorious for the commotion it inspired when screened at the ICA in London. The film consists of a blank white screen accompanied by cut up conversation — "But no-one's talking about Sade in this film" — interspersed with darkness and silence. Cornand showed an extract of one of these silences in her documentary (although it was impossible to tell which one). However, by reproducing what happened on the screen she failed to illustrate that Debord was drawing attention to what was happening off the screen, i.e. he was turning cinema into theatre; the screen, projector and film (if there was, in fact, anything more than an audio tape and instructions to the projectionist to turn their machine on and off) became props. Such a drama cannot be reproduced by television.

Hurlements is often left as a scandal, a joke. But Debord was acting out a *ludibrium*, something he would latter theorise as 'creating a situation'. The *ludibrium* is a variant of the Socratic method, which relies on action rather than dialogue to yield

a *reductio ad absurdum*. The technique was preserved by the sufis before being reintroduced to Europe by the Rosicrucians in the early seventeenth century. Frances Yates describes how a key Rosicrucian writer links it through drama with a project of social transformation:

> It is Andreae's strong interest in the drama which helps to explain the *ludibrium* of Christian Rosencreutz and his fraternity as, not a hoax, but a dramatic presentation of a profoundly interesting religious and intellectual movement. (Yates, 1972 , p.182)

And it is precisely from the hermetic revival of such groups as the Rosicrucians that the Lettrist Ivan Shcheglov drew when he wrote his *Formulary for a New Urbanism* (1953; in particular see Campanella's *City of the Sun*, 1622). Shcheglov's text was very important for the subsequent development of the Situationists and, indeed, Shcheglov appears fleetingly with Asger Jorn in *Society of the Spectacle* along with the words "Let's drink to friendship".

It is precisely in the 50 years around 1600 that modern drama emerged. Although it is fashionable to situate Debord simply in terms of the twentieth century avant-garde, any clear analysis of his work must take us to this period, when the spectacle emerged from a fusion of renaissance hermeticism, the popular theatre of the mystery plays and the application of emergent science to the visual organisation of the masque. From the *Intermezzi* of sixteenth century Florence to the masques of the court of Charles I of England, the spectacle played an important role in bonding the court together and addressing problems too sensitive to dealt with in a more open way (for example, the collapsing monarchy of Charles I could appeal for support through the masque when a direct appeal would have simply sped up the final collapse). Debord's references to such seventeenth century writers as Bossuet also point in this direction.

In England, Italian influences, from Dante's *Monarchia* to Palladio's *Four Books on Architecture,* fed into a process whereby Shakespeare and his contemporaries not only transformed English drama, but developed a stable national language. This was accomopanied by a revolution in staging techniques which incorporated the classical notion of the theatre as temple, utilised as much as in the building of the globe as in Wren's Operating Theatre (Yates, 1969). Inigo Jones's development of perspective in scenery design, flattening the image into two dimensions is a clear precursor of the film. But, whereas, during the renaissance Brunelleshi and Da Vinci reversed the Euclidean notion of the eye as an active organ projecting rays of light, the film projector reinstates Euclid.

Debord utilises this in the projection of scenes over which a monologue expounds his neo-platonist philosophy. The images are antagonistic to the monologue — soft porn, clips representing the American, Russian and Spanish civil wars, stereo typical pictures of politicians. At times they seem irrelevant almost random, but then they assert themselves again. Tightly cut segments are followed by excerpts from feature films, sometimes subtitled, other times with dialogue. (Here can be found some errors of translation in the Rebel Press book, where the text has gone from English into French and back into English again.)

Watching the film, Debord's call for civil war is far more apparent than when

simply reading the transcripts. He telescopes the American, Russian and Spanish civil wars together, which I found problematic: i.e. although the images of the Russian Civil War had references to workers solidarity, those of the American Civil War were not concerned with the popular revolts lead by such people as John Brown, but with the openly bourgeois Union Army.Towards the end of the film English subtitles read "We few, we happy few, we band of *brothers*" (my emphasis). Alongside the soft porn representations of women, and the repeated charges of the Michigan infantry, I wondered why Debord would want to so stress adolescent notions of male bonding. Apologists might claim he was trying to subvert such attitudes, but given his silence on gender relations, a simpler explanation might be more appropriate.

Fabian Tompsett

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THE MAGAZINE NETWORK:
The trends of alternative art in the light of their periodicals 1968-1988
by Geza Perneczky
translated from Hungarian by Tibor Szendrei

(Edition Soft Geometry, Gr. Witschg. 3-5, D 50676 Koln, Germany, 1993. 285 A4 pages.)

This is a English language edition (text only) of an illustrated work that was published in Hungary in 1991. The book is chiefly concerned with Mail Art, and uses small press publications as a means of approaching this subject. The text contains a great deal of original research about the 'marginal arts' and in particular xerography, concrete poetry, assembling, rubber stamp art, etcetera. Perneczky alternates the serious tone of the Central European intellectual with a great deal of anecdotal material about trawling through archives and meeting artists, thereby creating attractive variations in the rhythm of his prose. The reverence with which he treats what, to the Anglo-American world, might appear as very disposable artefacts is in fact highly productive in throwing up fresh questions about aesthetics.

Although he has been resident in the West for many years now, Perneczky grew up in a society in which independent artistic production was viewed as a form of political subversion, with both its proponents and opponents treating these activities

with a considered gravity. Now that the Anglo-American intelligence services are searching for new post-Cold War enemies to justify their expanding budgets, this is something those of us in the West who participate in the marginal arts would be well advised to scrutinise closely. Recently, Anti-Terrorist Squad detectives investigating a series of letter bombs sent to branches of Barclays Bank circulated the preposterous theory that this may have been an extreme act of 'art sabotage' and proceeded to link it to the prankster magazine *Hoax* and the long defunct Situationist International (see 'Sabotage Suspects Hail From Beyond The Fringe', *The Observer,* 18th December 1994).

Perneczky's book ranges over a very wide area both geographically and aesthetically, covering not only Europe, Canada and the United States, but also Latin American. This is very much a first mapping of previously uncharted territory and will prove invaluable to researchers needing a rough guide to the terrain with which to orientate themselves prior to drawing up street plans of specific areas. However in providing us with this sketch, Perneczky has simultaneously offered himself up as a target for abuse. For, although his general outline is sound, many of the details are inevitably wrong. Nevertheless, the importance of the context in which much marginal art is produced is drawn out very clearly in *The Magazine Network*, and this is a vast improvement on the very fractured views offered in compendiums of essays such as *Correspondence Art* edited by Mike Crane and Mary Stofflet (Contemporary Arts Press, San Francisco 1984).

Inevitably, the sections of Perneczky's book that I find most problematic are those concerned with Neoism, Plagiarism and the Art Strike, in which I was a very active participant. Perneczky's chronology of my involvement with the Neoist Network is hopelessly jumbled, and he even manages to describe my mouse brown hair as being blonde! However, while I view Perneczky's claim that I theorised the activities of the Neoist Network as being highly reductive, he nevertheless offers an interesting, and at times incisive, commentary on my work. This is achieved at the cost of treating my ideas as typical of those found within the parameters of Neoism, which is plainly absurd given that I became increasingly concerned with developing the discourses elaborated by the Situationists and Gustav Metzger, while it was official Fluxus that exercised the imaginations of many older Neoists (Istvan Kantor, Pete Horobin, Peter Below etcetera). Despite these limitations, *The Magazine Network* is a very necessary first step in providing a cartographic outline from which other researchers can proceed to draw more accurate maps of the terrain.

Stewart Home.

The Margins of the City: Gay Men's Urban Lives

edited by Steve Whittle

Popular Cultural Studies: 6
Arena (Ashgate Publishing Co. Ltd),
Aldershot, (1994).
(pp171)
ISBN 1 875 42 201 5/3

Marginality in social life is invariably organised and expressed spatially. *The Margins of the City* takes up the theme of "exclusion amid apparent inclusion" and marks out an emerging geography of gay life in the city: a "twilight zone ... on the edge of the middle of our cities". Contributors document the changing experience of gay men and the development of gay places, in cities as far removed as New York and Manchester, Toronto and Newcastle. Any discussion of the relationship between gay communities and the cities they inhabit, will inevitably dwell on issues relating to gay gentrification, urban renaissance and the 'pink pound'. In this context Hans Almgren reflects productively on the problems associated with the concept of community in general and gay communities in particular. Reflecting on Toronto's Cabbagetown and Riverdale neighbourhoods, Anne-Marie Bouthillette argues that second generation gentrifiers show a more accepting and less rebellious 'gay positive' attitude towards their sexuality. Housing has become a means of self-expression rather than "a statement about their wanting to overcome their marginality". However this conclusion underlines a voluntarist emphasis on the "interests, desires and actions" that gay communities have brought to bear in adopting urban space, which is apparent throughout the volume. This focus on agency, tends to underplay much broader political shifts and processes of economic restructuring which have created the conditions of possibility for gay gentrification, and the marketing of a 'gay quarter' as a municipal asset.

Steve Whittle counterpoises two analyses of the commercial scene in Manchester's GayVillage: an achievement of the Queer Nation, or a hegemonic strategy deployed by Gramsci's ethical and cultural state. Referring to the influx of straight society, he goes on to question the shared assumption that the Village is actually a safe space. The caveat is timely given the hyperbole informing much popular commentary on the Village. However whilst he does bring up the role of state power, the analysis extends little beyond a simplistic, struggle between 'us and them'; lesbians and gays as "dangerous forces which challenge the state". This is despite having underlined the crucial role played by the local state in underwriting the development of the Village in Manchester. Even here the interests and motivations at work in the local Labour administration have shifted. Gay Manchester has variously been incorporated into a discourse of municipal resistance against the Tories (part of the rainbow alliance) and, more recently, as one ingredient in the re-invention of the city, in line with an

economic script which emphasises pluralism and metropolitan diversity.

In working towards a fuller understanding of the role and location of gay communities in the new urban landscapes, there needs to be a greater emphasis on the constraints and opportunities afforded by (relatively autonomous) local government, but also a more central appreciation of the political economy of 'downtown' areas in the era of globalisation. Whittle is right to point out that the supposedly safe space in the commercialised Village is vulnerable to the vagaries of straight fashion. But it is also vulnerable to the shifting political and economic imperatives of the entrepreneurial city, not to mention real-estate markets. What is at issue is the development of new forms and functions for the capitalist city. Talking in terms of the erosion of gay space at the hands of the "*post-capitalist* straight world" (p.39 - my emphasis) is, at the least, imprecise! Marc Lewis is perhaps more apposite in taking the structural collapse of the North East's manufacturing/mining economy as the starting point for his analysis of the "multiple marginalisation" of Newcastle's commercial scene.

In the final section, contributions relate less to the changing urban and spatial forms of gay life, and more to the problems and possibilities which confront lesbian and gay researchers working within a predominantly straight academia. David Bell provides a useful survey of the subversive bi-sexual presence within lesbian and gay studies and the unfulfilled promise of Queer culture. Reflecting on his own research in the area of sadomasochism, Jon Binnie opens up a debate about sexuality in the research process by arguing for honesty and an appreciation that sexual desires and emotions shape and colour the perspective of all academic writing but especially the 'disembodied and objective' texts favoured by academic discourse. There are also interesting and self-contained essays relating to the impact of HIV and AIDS on the S&M scene, and a survey of research into 'gayspeak' and gay argots.

The collection is a significant addition to the growing literature relating to the interface between sexuality and the new urban landscapes. Its most useful contribution is simply in bringing together commentaries documenting developments in a number of very different cities. Whilst there are gaps in terms of theorising these developments, this does serve to underline the need for a rapprochement between experiential approaches concerned with meaning, and the broader dynamics of urban political economy. Only on this basis will it be possible to extend transatlantic comparisons between San Francisco and the likes of Manchester's Gay Village beyond the realms of academic speculation. There are indeed "different social and political driving forces ... [and] formative factors" (Hindle, p.22). But these 'factors' need specifying.

Steve Quilley

Negrophobia: An Urban Parable: A Novel

by Darius James,

St. Martin's Press, 1993 (first published by Citadel Press, 1992)

The conceit of **Negrophobia** is a familiar ruse of that venerable institution, the avant-garde; namely audacious and foul-mouthed parody. The reader (mental picture: 'shocked and guffawing' denizen of the Lower East Side) is liberally squirted with all manner of nasty visceral images squeezed from America's racist sub-consciousness. Bubbles Brazil, the White girl whose fantasy the novel (which is written in the form of a film script) relates, is the 'negrophobe' in question. And it is her body which becomes the principal receptacle of White America's most debased fears and desires of the Black Other.

Assailed by a fist-fucking Uncle Remus, savagely beaten by 'flapjack ninja queens', perpetually threatened by 'cackling coons' or 'zomboid crackheads', the character of Bubbles appears at first glance to be little more than the butt-end of a fairly pedestrian example of literary shock-tactics. However, just when one is getting thoroughly bored of wading through the endless pools of blood, sperm and vomit that seem to spill so readily from Darius James's pen, *Negrophobia* starts to get more interesting.

For, as the images become ever more grotesque, and as Bubbles journeys ever deeper into the racist imagination, it becomes apparent that the real intent of *Negrophobia* is not merely to expose White racism but to destabilize and subvert the idea of race itself. More specifically, the oppressive claustrophobia of the concepts of 'White people' and 'Black people' is made startlingly vivid by James. It emerges that Bubbles's horror of all things Black reflects the centrality of that category to her own identity. Bubbles, whose father was a Black and White Minstrel, whose most delirious child-hood games were escapes from Whiteness into fantasies of Blackness, demands and perpetuates Blackness as an essential part of her sense of self. This deconstruction of the colour-line gives the girl's monologues an unexpected pathos, an emotion that disturbs the book's more facile ambitions.

Bubbles

(v.o.)

It was those *black children* from the welfare projects! They did it! Those moon-headed, Kool Ad-drinking, doo-doo-coloured *Tar babies* in ragamuffin hand-me-downs

They smoked the reefer! *They* stole the booze! It was *niggers!* Not us! *Niggers!* It was *niggers* poking their greasy, fried-chicken-picken' fingers into our *wet, underaged pussies!* Not us! *Niggers!*

(p.157)

Darius James's subversion of racial reductionism doesn't remain solely rooted in an exposition of White mythologies. His knack of grotesque parody is also visited upon the illusions of negritude and Black Power politics. The latter, however, are seen to be embarked upon a politically more ambiguous enterprise. Malcolm X's singing corpse and massed ranks of philosophising 'Talking Dreads' are positioned both as agents of reaction and as curious prophets; within and against the racist project.

Negrophobia, then, is a more interesting read than it first appears to be. And yet, for all its deconstructive allure, this is a book that remains mired within an overly familiar avant-garde aesthetic. The novel's ideas are caged and obscured by its attachment to a badly dated vision of 'the shocked audience'. This, I suppose, is something of a shame. Having said all that, I for one am left tantalized and pleasantly gob-smacked by the puerile heroics of the book's opening statement:

NEGROPHOBIA
is a work of fiction,
a product of the author's imagination.
Any resemblance to any person,
living or dead,
is
purely coincidental.
Negrophobia is a work of fiction.
Every word is true. Fuck you.
THE AUTHOR

Alastair Bonnett

Race Traitor: Treason to Whiteness is Loyalty to Humanity

Issue Number 3, Spring 1994

(available from P.O. Box 603, Cambridge, MA, 02140, U.S.A.)

Race Traitor, a new journal from America, will startle and impress even the most self-satisfied cynic. Panegyric doesn't come easily to me. Yet, although far from being beyond criticism (of which more later), **Race Traitor** is, I believe, a publication of immense importance, originality and courage.

Its sub-title, 'Treason to Whiteness is Loyalty to Humanity', sums up its project: to critique and oppose the racial category of 'Whiteness'. An editorial in the issue under review explains,

> Two points define the position of **Race Traitor**: first, that the "white race" is not a natural but a historical category; second, that what was

historically constructed can be undone. (p.108)

To this end **Race Traitor** gathers together scholarly histories, personal biographies and interview material with contemporary activists. The highlights of issue 3 include a nicely nuanced piece by Christopher Day on the links between racism and homophobia and, by extension, what he calls 'race treason and queer liberation'. Noel Ignatiev's historical piece on the political vision of early White labour movement activists, such as Seth Luther and George Evans, is also a useful, if at times simplistic, exposition. Ignatiev's basic thesis, that American White working-class radicalism disabled its own revolutionary ambitions by positioning Whiteness as central to its self-identity, may be familiar (increasingly so thanks to the work of David Roediger and Theodore Allen) but detailed historical studies of how this process worked (or works) in practice remain all too scarce.

Ignatiev's article is useful for another reason. For it will considerably assist non-American readers make some historical sense of **Race Traitor**'s own political ambitions. The historical burden of the American left, the burden that **Race Traitor** is attempting to lift, is, after all, precisely the process Ignatiev identifies: the destructive impact White racial consciousness has had, and continues to have, upon working-class solidarity. Within the critical optic of the contributors to **Race Traitor**, Whiteness and socialism are construed as antithetical projects. Or, as one of the journal's editors phrases it, "we will never have true democracy so long as we have a 'white community'" (p.125).

The basic premise of **Race Traitor** is highly appealing for those committed to drawing White identity into a deconstructive critique of the concept of 'race' (despite the fact that the editors throw-out, without explanation, an ill-judged dismissal of deconstruction, see p.115). However, its rootedness in the American situation, creates two major problems, problems which endanger the journal's enterprise and seriously undermine its potential international impact. These are, a) an homogenization of Whiteness, and b) a romanticization of Blackness. Linking these problems lies a recognizable, and increasingly redundant, trait of American 'race' commentary, a fetishistic attachment to 'Black/White' racial dualities. Racial identity (both White and non-White) has mutated in recent years, and the racial dynamics of American life (especially in areas with substantial Spanish speaking populations) have changed, in ways that the editors of **Race Traitor** simply cannot afford to ignore. In Britain, where the Black and White view of race was, in large measure, imported from the States in the 1960s and crudely imposed on a dynamic and complex 'racial situation' (an interesting example of cultural colonialism that awaits its historian), anti-racists have become increasingly sceptical of attempts to homogenize and romanticize White people's Other as an eternally 'resisting', forever 'militant', Black mass. The latter is seen by many now as a manipulatively unreflexive and oppressive re-presentation, one that says as much about the attempts of inner-city radicals to make sense of a situation that increasingly escapes their ideological apparatus, as it does about the complex, fractured and contradictory realities of urban conflict and solidarity.

It needs to be noted here that **Race Traitor**'s project is not merely to destroy Whiteness but to enable Whites to 'assimilate' Blackness. Of course, Blackness too is seen as a social construction. But it is construed as a construction that needs, for

strategic reasons, to be supported and reproduced. The editors argue that,

> when whites reject their racial identity, they take a big step towards becoming human. But may that step not entail, for many, some engagement with blackness, perhaps even an identification as 'black'? Recent experience, in this country and elsewhere, would indicate that it does. (p.115)

The rationale of this position is clearly political, recognizing as it does the different socio-economic positions Whites and Blacks hold in Western societies. Accusations that **Race Traitor** is, somehow, not being 'fair', because it doesn't wish to destroy Blackness in the same way it wishes to destroy Whiteness, must thus be judged somewhat naive. In other respects, however - and in the context of the two points of criticism made above - the attempt to instate Blackness in the place of Whiteness is clearly problematic. It relies on both an erasure of the multiplicity and mutability of the racial positions that currently exist and on a romantic construction of Blackness, a construction that has more of the hall-marks of political desperation than rigorous and unsentimental critique.

So, in conclusion, **Race Traitor**, is a marvellous yet flawed project. It is worthy of support and worthy of the $20 (4 issues) subscription price. It's worthy too of constructive critique. I just hope it doesn't become too set its ways, too attached to one particular 'party-line', and too parochially American, to prevent it from fulfilling the central role within contemporary political debate that it deserves.

Alastair Bonnett

Civilisation

by Sid Meier
Published by Microprose

The subtitle of this computer game is *Build An Empire To Stand The Test Of Time*. This involves nuturing a tribal group for six thousand years and turning them into 'Good Americans'. As a teenager I worked out how Simulations Publications Inc., the foremost manufacturer of wargames, embedded US Army ideology within the very structure of their games. They were incapable of producing a decent game out of Vietnam. They didn't understand why the US was losing. When they produced *Firefight* in 1976 they were able to sell their product to the army as a training tool. With *Cityfight* (1979) the game reached such complexity that it was more or less unplayable. Nevertheless, the structure of its rules could be used to analyse US military thinking on urban warfare.

Thus in reviewing a game I am less interested in arriving at a subjective evaluation of the pleasure derived from the it, than in seeing it as an ideological baggage train, whose contents can be poked around with. Here, we are presented with

modern America as the crown of creation, particularly the space programme. The goal is to colonise space. The player sets out with a group of settlers equipped with a few skills, such as irrigation, road building and mining. The game designers have aimed at an addictive game (I stayed up all night a couple of times, so I guess they succeeded). What this means is that they layer rewards so that the player is continually having tactical success reinforced. This functions at two levels, the acquisition of knowledge and the development of cities.

Knowledge is acquired by expending economic resources on scientific research. Enough surplus must be created if this cultural evolutionary chain is to be followed. By constructing an intricate system, whereby you cannot develop "Magnetism" until you have got "Navigation" and "Physics", each game can evolve around different strategies for knowledge. Knowledge can also be gained by stealing technology from rival (computer run) civilisations or by conquering their towns.

Each level of knowledge is not simply a step towards the final goal, it can also allow new military units, types of civic improvements or aspects of social organisation to enter the game. Thus the course of the game is affected by whether dealing with a military rival is more important than domestic growth.

City life is, in the first place, determined by the local terrain, which can be improved through irrigation, mining etc. However, as the town grows, measures are needed to provide pacification (Temples, Colloseums, Cathedrals) for an unruly population. The yield from the land is also effected by the type of government. Thus 'democracy' is presented as the ideal, even though this is balanced with a negative effect whenever troops from that city leave town — i.e. 'democracy' creates the most efficient economic circumstance, but is lousy for war.

I have to admit that having played the game half a dozen times I haven't mastered 'democracy'. Whenever I veer from smashing the opposition with maximum force, they seem to grow too powerful and destroy my little empire. Whilst this means that I have been able survive 6,000 years, I still end up with a mediocre score. So far I have been unable to internalise the values embodied in their structure of 'democracy' and, thereby, get a really high score. In fact, I'm not sure if I want to internalise such values.

In the seventies, when I enjoyed strategic wargames, one of the downsides was that combat resolution involved a lot of tedious calculation of odds. With the advent of the personal computer I looked forward to the appearance of strategic computer games, where such mechanical tasks were all but eliminated. (With the board wargames, the situation developed to the point that the bureaucrat, who could memorise most rules and contrive to tip the odds in the most artificial way, would usually win.)

Only now are really sophisticated games like *Civilisation* appearing. As their structure has been internalised within the computer, what I once thought would be an asset, I now find makes me wary. Whereas before I had access to much of the in-built ideology (which I could largely neutralise by the very act of comprehending), now I feel myself to be ideologically programmed, success at the game being the absorption of the programme. As a tool for social indoctrination, such games are more powerful

than TV or film. They imply the active participation of the subject who greets the consumption of each ideological level with a sense of acheivement, rather like a student does when they pass an exam. Game reviews tend to merely be an adjunct to marketing, and so avoid any analysis of how such 'infotainment' is being used to create another layer of mind control.

Luther Blissett

Exploding Cinema

In this review I shall deal with the *Exploding Cinema* (*EC*) as much as a concept as in terms of a series of events. For the *Exploding Cinema* exists as a concept; a concept, perhaps, peculiar to London (although there maybe other cities in the world which could have given rise to it). London provides certain features which are necessary to produce such an entity as *EC*. There is a broad range of venues at which are shown an equally broad range of films: the seedy cinemas in Soho; the more oppulent West End establishments; clubs specialising in Kung Fu; even the Turkish club/restaurants which run videos while you eat.

Moreover, there is, alongside mainstream film production, a vibrant independent sector which produces some of the most tedious dross around, and is run by a corrupt sect that acts as a transmission belt between such bastions of the establishment as the British Film Institute and alternative institutions such as the London Film Makers Co-operative. With increasing technical and financial ease, people with little or no training can buy a Super 8 camera on a market stall for a fiver, or for a few hundred quid get a camcorder, and start wacking stuff out. But aside from flogging some manicured mistakes to *You've Been Framed*, there are few opportunities for having this material screened.

Exploding Cinema has emerged as a moving venue which has an open screening policy. It emerged from a group of film makers who wanted to open some social space outside the grant-subsided world of 'independent film'. Realising that much of the material that would be shown would actually be crap, they set out to create an ambience where the audience would not be treated as a passive block bombarded by images. They would abandon reverence for the film and organise the occasions as a social meeting point for people interested in film, performance and their physical setting

The best events (Brixton Lido, Farringdon) have been those where the layout of the venue has offered a multitude of spaces. The participant could wander off if they didn't like what was being shown, get some food, go to a bookstall, chat, have a drink. At such events it has also been possible to set aside rooms for the showing of longer works (the open screening policy in practice has meant that generally much shorter films and videos have tended to dominate). People attend for the overall event, although there might also be specific films they want to see. The film maker is invited to make themself known, and may be questioned. The events have also given space to

performance artists and poets, although the inclusion of music has occasionally disrupted the atmosphere.

When the space has been dominated by one large area, the *EC* has been less successful (such as the event at the Rivoli Ballroom, Brockley on 22nd December, 1994). As with any experimental process, mistakes are, from time to time, inevitable. And on this occasion *EC* handed over the compereing to a group of Christian do-gooders, who insisted on spreading the 'good news' of Christmas in a sub-Julian Cleary 'camp' style more suitable for an Art School Rag week event than one at which real people were likely to attend. Nevertheless, the atmosphere of participation asserted itself when these creeps were confronted by a member of the 'audience' who complained that their antics had lead half the people present to leave.

When the event has been taken to venues outside London, it has not always been able to realise its goals. Perhaps this is because, in such places, people have not been so jaded by a wide choice of films, as in London, and go to *EC* solely to see unusual films. Nevertheless, at the Oxford Alternative Distribution Seminar it was amusing to watch film-makers become aware of an environment where their films might be shown without being the dominant mode of social discourse.

EC has not only travelled across Britain, but also made visits to Europe and Ireland. Here the erosion of the division between performer and audience has been more easily grasped, with locals leaving the 'auditorium' to go home and get a film they'd made. They have also participated in the Kino Flasch-flood Experienz in Belgium and are scheduled for a follow up in Bologna, November 1995.

Finally, I wouldn't want to give the impression that all the films shown are crap. Some have been excellent. Jenet Thomas's *Heady* is a short animation chronicling the highs and lows in the life of an inflatable head. Also of particular note is *Snuff* by Alison Thomson and David Blackburn, which in 15 minutes strikingly makes a point about pornographic violence.

Fabian Tompsett

Two Earth Mysteries magazines

The 1990's has seen the blossoming of Earth Mysteries magazines. New magazines have started appearing, and the more established ones are now much better produced. While some specialise in a particular area, others take up particular topics (such as *Source*, which deals with Holy Wells).

This movement indicates, perhaps, a more general cultural shift away from the white heat of technology of the sixties, when town planners might have succeeded in instilling a sense of pride in a town's inhabitants by offering them a new by-pass.

Those days are gone, and while motorists might jealously guard the sense of freedom they feel a car offers them, this is now something that is taken for granted rather than seen as a boon offered by technical development. Instead, more and more voices are raised to question the continuing expansion of the road system. Rather than

be enticed into the utilitarian discussion of modern urbanism, Earth Mysteries provides an organising principle located in local folklore, mythology and sacred sites. As such it offers a very different perspective on modern urbanism.

3rd Stone

The Magazine for the New Antiquarian

(formerly Gloucestershire Earth Mysteries magazine)
Sample issue £2.50 from PO Box 258, Cheltenham GL53 0HR

3rd Stone, its name taken from a Hendrix track ("You'll never hear surf music again"), offers a 'smooth place' where the local historian can meet up with a New Age pagan (they might even be the same person). As its name suggests *3rd Stone* pays particular attention to stones, whether they be the "Ancient Crosses of Gloucestershire", "A Worccestershire Stone Puzzle" or the mapping and dowsing of "The Blackstone Circle": "Now and then somone will ask us 'What is so interesting about a lump of old stone?' They can't understand why we get so excited and to explain this could take forever. Stones have been erected for thousands of years to mark important places, places to meet, to trade and places that have magical and religious significance." Alongside this concentration on stones, there is still scope to deal with leylines and UFOs.

Wisht Maen

Devon Earth Mysteries Magazine No.3

Condors, Exeter Street, North Tawton, Devon EX20 2HB

Each Earth Mysteries magazine develops its own character, developing out of the very land upon which it is centred. *Wisht Maen* also draws upon folklore, the first article discussing *Tintagel and the Mystery of Divine Kingship*. After listing sites across Britain associated with Arthur, the author, Paul Broadhurst, writes "There are hundreds more across Europe and even further afield. Was Arthur really so well travelled? No — the solution is that the name was a title of kingship, and that any spot with Arthur's name attached indicates that it was once a place of power over the surrounding country." Another article discusses the curious appearance of a triple rabbit motif in Widdicombe Church. Quoting and disproving a nineteenth century source linking this image with alchemical works by Basil Valentine and Elias Ashmole, the author, Jeremy Harte, concocts an imaginary scene of masons and carpenters jostling with miners and farmhands in the local pub as they come up with the design. Alongside discussions of other local sites and a lively letters section, there is a piece opening a debate on that old thorny topic, the Megalithic Yard.

Karen Eliot

Transgressions

A Journal of Urban Exploration

Transgressions: exploring new pathways in the city; sniffing out moments of revolt, moments of submission, extraordinary possibilities and everyday struggle ...

Contents

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Recent years have witnessed a growth of interest in the cultural politics of the city. A debate has arisen on the contested nature of urban space and its transgression and transformation by different social groups.

Transgressions is a new journal with an international perspective that aims to situate itself at the heart of this discussion. Drawing on activists, cultural workers and writers from urban planning, architecture and art history as well as from sociology, geography and cultural studies, **Transgressions** will provide an essential forum for the critical debate of the contemporary city.

Cover: *Détourned map of Newcastle with traces of Dérive Routes from original design by James Burch*

Published by Salamander Press (London) Ltd